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ABSTRACT

This updated guide is designed to provide college admissions personnel with a resource that covers aspects of the admission of international students to colleges and universities in the United States and helps with exchange programs in which U.S. students study abroad. The chapters are: (1) "Institutional Mission Statement and Policy Considerations Regarding International Education"; (2) "International Recruitment Principles and Practice"; (3) "The International Admission Office: Policies, Procedures, and Processes"; (4) "Technology in the International Office"; (5) "International Academic Credential Evaluation: Basic Methodology"; (6) "Credential Evaluation in an Undergraduate Setting"; (7) "Fraudulent Credentials: How To Protect Your Institution against Fraud"; (8) "Determining Transfer Credit from International Academic Credentials"; (9) "Roles and Issues for Community Colleges"; (10) "English Proficiency and Admission Policy"; (11) "Admitting International Students: The Student Visa"; (12) "Certification of Finances for Obtaining the Student Visa"; (13) "Study Abroad Program Development and Legal Considerations"; and (14) "Professional Development: Expanding Your International Horizon." Three appendixes contain a list of resource organizations and institutions, a list of publications and useful resources, and the bill of rights of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers. (SLD)

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AACRAO Professional
Development & Education Series

The AACRAO International Guide: **A Resource for International Education Professionals**

Prepared for AACRAO by:

Joseph Sevigny
Project Coordinator
Northwestern University

AACRAO® 1910 **American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers**

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), founded in 1910, is a nonprofit, voluntary, professional association of more than 9,400 higher education admission and registration professionals who represent nearly 2,500 institutions and agencies in the United States and in 28 countries around the world. The mission of the association is to provide leadership in policy initiation, interpretation, and implementation in the global educational community. This is accomplished through the identification and promotion of standards and best practices in enrollment management, information technology, instructional management, and student services. AACRAO members are primarily registrars, admissions officers, and enrollment managers, as well as other professionals in related enrollment offices.

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Introduction

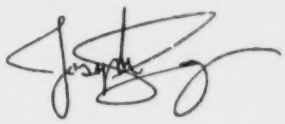
I am delighted to be able to present the updated version of *The AACRAO International Guide: A Resource for International Education Professionals.* This venerable publication is a critical part of any international reference library and this is the first revision in almost a decade. Imagine how much has changed in our field in the past ten years. New technologies have drawn the world closer together than ever before. As professionals in the field of international education, we are fortunate to be on the front lines of this exciting transformation.

As more and more international students choose to study in U.S. colleges and universities and as more U.S. students study abroad, professionals in this field need a resource that will help them make informed decisions or improve various processes. *The Guide* is just such a resource. In its former incarnation, this publication was known as *The Guide: A Resource for International Admission Professionals.* The updated version has expanded information in all chapters and the addition of a new chapter on study abroad. Its appeal and its usefulness extend beyond the admission office into other realms of international education and the new title incorporates this spirit.

An amazing collection of authors came together to bring this project to fruition. Drawn from all fields of international education, from colleges and universities around the country, and from various organizations and enterprises, this stellar group of your dedicated colleagues devoted a significant amount of time and energy to updating this publication. Their expertise and experience will help guide you through the many unique challenges that you will face in this field. I was honored to work with such a creative group and my profound thanks goes out to each author who contributed to this project. In addition, Martha Henebry, the AACRAO Assistant Director, Association Services, deserves a round of applause for her advice and assistance during this project.

On behalf of the many colleagues in this field, I would also like to add a special note of thanks to Gloria Nathanson, the AACRAO Vice President for International Education. This publication represents Gloria's desire to improve the resources available in our field. It is fitting that *The Guide* is updated during Gloria's term as Vice President since she was the project manager for the previous edition of this publication. Her encouragement and assistance were invaluable to the success of this project.

We are very proud of *The AACRAO International Guide: A Resource for International Education Professionals* and we hope that you find it to be a useful tool in your professional growth and development.



Joseph Sevigny
Northwestern University
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CHAPTER 1

Institutional Mission Statement and Policy Considerations Regarding International Education

Overview

Institutional Mission Statements often include indirect support for international education: "Preparing graduates to take their place in the global market place," or "developing an understanding of, and appreciation for, diversity" spring to mind. These are fine as far as they go, but where is the specific statement as to why the presence of international students is valued, and why study abroad is encouraged? And what about faculty and staff exchanges?

If your institution already has a de facto commitment to international exchanges, why hide that fact? Tout it loud and clear in your catalog and promotional materials.

If your institution is new to enrolling foreign students or sending students abroad, then establishing an institutional policy statement regarding the various aspects of international education will help to bring the campus community together in support of these activities.

Mission, Strategic, Policy, and Tactical Defined

While "mission" has religious roots, "strategic" and "tactical" have military applications, and "policy," in modern times, comes to us from the world of insurance, all four words have stood the business world in good stead. Let us examine, then, how the dictionary definitions of these words may enlighten our use, in the higher education community, of the terms Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, Policy Statement, and Recruitment Tactics.

We will proceed from the general to the specific. The following definitions come from *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, 1988 Edition, The New Lexicon.

Mission: "An aim in life, arising from a conviction or a sense of calling," perfectly describes institutional Mission Statements. When such statements are adopted, it should be with earnest conviction among all stake holders, i.e., 'This is what we believe," or, "This is what we, as an institution, are about." Having the institutional mission statement in the catalog and clearly displayed around the campus may seem, to some, overzealous. But, in keeping with the religious roots of the word "mission," a little zeal ("persistent fervent devotion to a cause") can work institutional wonders by bringing a common focus to disparate campus activities.

Yes, the academic, business, and student services areas can work towards common goals—and achieve those goals.

Strategy: "The science and art of conducting a military campaign in its large-scale and long-term aspects." Many institutions place their Strategic Plans on their web sites for all the world to see. While it may not seem like the stealthy thing to do, letting the rest of the world know what their "Big Picture" and long-term goals are, can only help keep these institutions focused on their mission. And that mission will be achieved by following sound strategic plans, which, in turn, are supported by sound policies at all institutional levels (see below).

Policy: "A selected, planned line of conduct in the light of which individual decisions are made and coordination achieved." Very straight forward. First, there must be a plan, which guides all decision making, and that plan and decisions must be coordinated. For example, it makes no sense to recruit international students if no institutional policies are in place regarding the assessment of foreign educational credentials, English language proficiency, financial certification, and transfer of credits from abroad. These policies should be in place before the first international student is enrolled.

NATIONAL POLICY

The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that the 491,000 foreign students studying in the United States contribute $13 billion to the U.S. economy. NAFSA's estimate is a more conservative $11 billion, but the point is the presence of foreign students on our campuses is part of U.S. foreign and economic policy. Indeed, on April 19, 2000, President Clinton issued "...an expanded International Education Policy aimed at preparing U.S. students for an ever more global environment while continuing to attract and educate future leaders from abroad."

A secondary definition of policy as "a document containing the contract made between an individual and an insurance company" also serves our needs.

Because what is a college catalog if not a contract between the student and the institution? By being so bold as to state the value of enrolling foreign students, the institution is letting domestic students know that they will be exposed to other cultures, values, and world views—at no extra cost!

Tactical: This term comes last because we have proceeded from the general to the specific. The tactical, then, is "(a plan of action) astutely thought out so as to advance a purpose or gain an advantage." Recruitment comes to mind, as does the phrase "competitive advantage."

Developing a Policy Statement for the International Office

If your campus has an efficient committee structure, you could convene a committee and spend a considerable amount of time debating what should be included, and in what order, before the first word is set to paper. Or, you could sit down and write a statement, or make a list of benefits to the institution, as straw horses to get things going.

If you feel you cannot develop, or "sell," such a draft statement on your own, then, by all means enlist the assistance of a few colleagues. Every campus has faculty who will be willing to attest to the virtues of international educational exchanges, among them, foreign language and ESL faculty. But why stop there? The social sciences and humanities faculty can provide wonderful interdisciplinary justification for international exchanges. And business, agriculture, and engineering faculty often have foreign experience and connections.

Finally, don't overlook the international students and alumni, and students who have studied abroad. What about people in the community and civic organizations, which have an interest in things international, e.g., Rotary International and the American Association of University Women (AAUW)? There is more support for international education than you may realize. Your job is to mobilize that support.

Do you have a database which lists faculty who have studied abroad or have been Fulbright Scholars? Do you have a record of the Fulbright Scholars from abroad who have taught or done research on your campus? Do you have accurate numbers on foreign student enrollment and study abroad? The NAFSA web site www.nafsa.org contains templates for estimating the economic impact of foreign student enrollments on your community. Figures for the economic impact by state are contained in The Institute of International Education *Open Doors* and available on their web site, www.iie.org.

The Easy (but perhaps risky) Alternative

The three-bullet "philosophy," below, from Monterey Peninsula College (MPC), is an example of a short, direct institutional philosophy developed by a committee of one:

- MPC recognizes the importance of preparing students to take their place in an increasingly global community.
- The presence of international students on our campus and in our community increases our understanding of, and respect for, the world's many cultures.
- International students gain a deep understanding of American life through their MPC experience.

Fortunately, MPC has a long-standing commitment to providing international student support services. The benefits of enrolling international students are widely recognized on campus. Whether one is talking to faculty, administration, students, or members of the community, the academic, social, economic, and cultural impact of an international student presence is praised.

If foreign students are not a rallying point on your campus, start elsewhere. Foreign language study and study abroad are making inroads into the goals and objectives of educational institutions. What may be missing is a specific philosophy as to why these are valuable experiences. You will gain important allies in promoting international education if you help bring more visibility to study abroad and foreign language study on your campus.

Sounds Good, But Not on My Campus

In your quest to establish an institutional policy in support of international education, you may hear, "That all sounds good, but we have certain structures and rules of engagement." While circumventing the governance structure of your institution may not be advisable, autonomy in getting things done in the international arena is often times necessary. If you don't do it, who will? The President? The Board of Trustees? If you have access, by all means use it, but if not, you can still get the ball rolling with the help of a few key people—faculty, students, and community people, to be precise.

Mission Statements are Fine, But How Do They Relate to Our Strategic Plan?

While Mission Statements are often short and general, the Strategic Plan is more detailed in that it provides the road map to achieve specific goals and objectives. Achieving specific goals and objectives can, at the same time,, fulfill the headier elements of the Mission Statement.

But even Strategic Plans are not meant to be looked at on a daily basis. At the operational (or tactical) level, processes and procedures must be consistent with the Strategic Plan, and in turn, with the institutional Mission Statement. (See Chapter 3—The International Admission Office: Policies, Procedures, and Processes.)

All colleges have recruitment and retention goals. These may be explicit or implicit, but in either event, tactics for filling the next class exist. Most colleges and universities have very specific numerical goals. Why not include in these goals the desired number of international students, e.g., "By the end of this fiscal year, Whatsamatta U. will…

1. Enroll X number of international students
2. Increase the number of countries represented to Y
3. Increase the international enrollment to Z percentage of FTE

These things can be done at the tactical level, whether or not a college or university has published a Mission Statement or Strategic Plan which supports foreign student enrollment, study abroad, or faculty exchanges. But, it is, of course, better to work from an integrated whole, in what Jonas and Popovics[1] call "the enrollment management organization."

Some Other Considerations

- How will the international office be structured?
- To whom will the director report?
- What services will be provided, and by whom?
- Will services for international students be centralized?
- How will the office be budgeted and staffed?
- Will international students be served by already existing student services?

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[1] Jonas, Dr. Peter M. and Dr. Alexander J. Popovics. (2000). Beyond the Enrollment Management Organization: The Enrollment Management Organization. College and University, (Fall), 3–8.

- Do staff require additional training?
- Who will be responsible for the evaluation of foreign educational credentials and transfer credit?
- Who will manage the INS-mandated tracking of international students?

"NAFSA: Association of International Educators' Principles for Institutions www.nafsa.org/content/InsideNAFSA/EthicsandStandards/PrinciplesInstitutions.htm provides a good beginning point for campus discussion. From this site, you may wish to click on "Sections and PEGs" for further information about the various specializations which make for a strong international education program on your campus. These sections, or areas of expertise, include international admissions, English as a second language, foreign student and scholar advising, community programming, study abroad, overseas educational advisors, and working with sponsoring and programming agencies. Each sectional site contains practical and rich detail and further links to help begin or improve your commitment to international education exchange."

Sample International Education Mission Statements

Following are excerpts from actual mission statements. Some are short and direct, while others go into more detail. Bold type indicates emphasis added by this author.

Upon reading these examples, the reader will see that mission statements can (and probably should be) as unique as the institution they represent. But mission statements can also be so general that few could disagree with the sentiment expressed. The point is to have the discussions which lead to agreement on where your institution is headed vis-à-vis international student enrollment, academic exchanges, study abroad, and above all, support services for international education. The institutions represented below have clearly held such discussions, and more importantly, each campus exhibits a strong commitment to student support services.

Lynn University, Boca Raton, FL

"...VISION

The governing Board of Trustees is committed to developing academic programs that reflect the importance of global transformation, multicultural awareness and international exchange."

"...MISSION

Academic programs are coordinated with a range of **support services**, extra curricular activities, **international and cultural exchange programs**, and career opportunities to promote students' ongoing intellectual, professional and personal development. Education, service and leadership are emphasized throughout the University experience."

"Lynn University will have fulfilled its purpose if its graduates leave with knowledge, confidence, competencies, and ethical consciousness to assume positions of responsibility and leadership as productive, **global citizens** prepared for life-long learning.

The University will seek to ensure that its students come to understand the global dimensions of their local environments and are prepared to accept the challenges of cultural diversity and global citizenship."

Lynn University not only provides a strong mission statement, but goes one step further by providing a vision, endorsed by its Board of Trustees.

Nebraska Wesleyan University, Lincoln, NE

"...The academic experience at Nebraska Wesleyan University will ensure **an understanding of global issues and cultural diversity** and will thus significantly enhance the contributions which Nebraska Wesleyan graduates will make to the region, the nation, and the **world**."

Nebraska Wesleyan not only provides a mission statement, but goes on to identify specific strategies for achieving its mission:

"...The University will work to increase the geographic, ethnic, and cultural diversity of its student body through intensified and targeted **recruitment** of ethnic minority students, students from other states, and international students. Appropriate goals will be developed for targeted **financial aid** programs to assist needy students in these categories and for appropriate campus support systems."

Finally, excerpted from a multi-page document, are the following goals, which make clear to the entire campus what is expected:

"...INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM GOALS

Nebraska Wesleyan is committed:

1. To encourage students, faculty, and staff to live, study, work and travel abroad.
2. To integrate global and multicultural perspectives into the curriculum.
3. To provide a welcoming environment for international students, faculty and visitors."

New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, NM

"...The Office of International Education at New Mexico Highlands University serves to **promote international awareness, knowledge, and experiences** which will enable students, faculty, staff and the Las Vegas community **to participate actively and thrive in the global community**. The Office emphasizes Highlands' unique environment, location, multicultural history and resources **to foster the international exchange of students, scholars and faculty**."

This statement was chosen because New Mexico Highlands states its commitment to faculty exchanges. Even major research universities, which have a long history of academic exchanges, do not list this commitment on their web sites or in their catalogs.

Juniata Coliege, Huntingdon, PA

"As a community, Juniata is especially concerned with the environment necessary to foster individual growth. It therefore values mutual support, the free exchange of diverse ideas, and the active pursuit of both cooperative and individual achievement. **As a member of the international community, Juniata extends the students' academic experience into the world** and encourages the free and open exchange of thought among **peoples from distinct cultures and nations**."

"In the 21st century, a liberally-educated person will be one whose thoughts are not bounded by a single cultural or national experience. **Global problems will require global solutions**. Appropriate responses will emerge only if citizens and leaders consciously operate with a global perspective."

Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN

"...In order to offer the richest educational experience possible, the College strives **to bring together women of different nations, cultures, and races**. It provides a residential environment where women grow in their appreciation of the strengths and needs of others. Through a host of **co-curricular programs** on campus and in the **local community**, Saint Mary's initiates students in the habits of civic responsibility. Engaging in all aspects of the college experience, students acquire the hallmarks of a liberally educated woman: keen self-knowledge, lively imagination, lifelong intellectual and cultural interests, and the ability to make socially responsible choices about the future."

Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA

"...We also believe that **knowledge of traditions and cultures different from our own draws us closer to the human family** of which we are a part and **makes us more aware of both the possibilities and limitations of our own heritage**. Therefore, in addition to our primary emphasis on Western culture, we seek to provide for our students some opportunity to become familiar with a variety of other human cultures."

The last three examples play to the strengths of each institution, e.g., Juanita College's sense of community, which includes the global community; Saint Mary's women's college tradition and co-curricular activities; and Gonzaga's Jesuit tradition.

National Association of College Admissions Counselors, Washington, DC

"...The following set of guidelines is based on NACAC's belief that all students, whether us citizens, U.S. permanent residents, or international students, should be treated fairly in the college admission process. This document further recognizes that international students and us citizens living outside the United States often face particular issues and concerns when seeking admission to us colleges and universities. These guidelines therefore are intended to supplement the Statement of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP) by recommending standards of professional and **ethical practice for the recruitment, admission, and support of international students and us citizens living outside the United States**."

See also AACRAO's International Student Bill of Rights for a document that has been endorsed by governments, agencies, and academic institutions. The International Student Bill of Rights is divided into four sections: rights and responsibilities of institutions, and rights and responsibilities of students. For more information about how your institution can endorse the International Student Bill of Rights, see http://www.aacrao.org/intrnal-frame.html.

University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS

"...The goal of the KU offices, academic units, service agencies, and individual faculty involved in our international student recruitment program is to identify, recruit, admit, and enroll a diverse group of academically talented students from around the world at the University of Kansas. We believe that by bringing women and men to campus with different backgrounds, languages, customs, and beliefs, we create a more stimulating and vibrant environment for living and learning for all of our KU students. Towards this end, we will strive to attract undergraduate and graduate students who will increase student diversity on campus; enhance the quality of our student body; and will benefit from and contribute to KU's challenging array of academic and extracurricular programs."

State University of New York–Oswego

"...The Mission of the Office of International Student and Scholar Services is to attract and support a critical mass of international students to the campus, sufficient to provide and enhance a global learning environment."

The Kansas and SUNY Oswego statements are similar in that they have addressed the issue of enrolling international students, and they have officially stated their commitment to diversity and global learning.

University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

"...The Office of International Affairs (OIA) offers leadership, coordination and service to the University and community in four areas. OIA:

- provides services to international students;
- counsels American students, faculty and staff about opportunities for study, work and travel overseas;
- interacts with the outside community on international matters; and
- attracts funded international research and service programs to the University."

Here we have a statement concerning an institutional commitment to provide support services for its international students and scholars. The University of Kentucky is not alone, among land-grant institutions, actively pursuing contracts and grants. It is, indeed, encouraging to see academic and student affairs working toward common goals.

University of Findlay, Findlay, OH

The Global Awareness Peer Program (GAPP) team exists to encourage student growth and development through education on global issues by organizing activities and services, celebrating cultural differences, and acculturating international and American students to various customs, lifestyles, and ideas in an effort to meet the diverse needs of all students."

What a concept! What an opportunity for student leadership development.

Duke University & Medical Center, Durham, NC

"...The Duke International Office serves as a nexus for monitoring and shaping legislation, regulations, and policies at the federal, state and local levels that affect international educational exchange, and for interpreting and applying those directives and controls in the Duke environment in support of the teaching, research, patient care, and community service goals of the university, medical center, health system and affiliated institutions."

Here we enter the esoteric world of the "directives and controls" of various federal agencies, the us Department of Labor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, (which is housed within the us Department of Justice), the us Department of State, and the Social Security Administration, to name a few. See also *http://* www.usdoj.gov for a description and updates of the federally mandated foreign student tracking system, CIPRIS: the Coordinated Interagency Program Regarding International Students.

Government regulations have a significant impact on international education activities. It behooves those wishing to participate—and to remain legal and retain their authority to issue government forms—to be cognizant of federal regulations which could affect the best written mission statements, and underlying policies.

CIPRIS has been renamed the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) in an obvious attempt to defuse vociferous objections from colleges, universities, and education and professional associations, concerning the fee payment methodology involved in the CIPRIS legislation which affects F-1, J-1, and M-1 students. Indeed, the Fulbright Program, which is administered by the State Department as the Exchange Visitor Program, has widespread support. INS, and by extension international students, are under the Justice Department. Although both the State Department and the Justice Department are involved in the administration of SEVP, it was disingenuous at best to borrow the good name of the Fulbright Program, which encourages faculty and student exchanges, to use in conjunction with a new program, which if implemented as proposed, will keep qualified students from studying in the United States. At press time, implementation of a mandated, nonrefundable $95 fee was still being considered by INS, with the Congress expressing concern that such a fee will make it more difficult for students to study in the United States—at a time when other countries are making it easier for students to obtain visas.

Maricopa Community College District, Tempe, AZ

"...Our objective is to provide effective, innovative, student-centered and flexible educational opportunities to a diverse constituency. Our students are equipped to solve the problems of their communities, run businesses and industries and contribute to the economic success of their homelands.

The following statements are useful beyond the academic world. Indeed, they help to integrate the spheres of world trade, diplomacy, academia and training:

Juan G. Cruz, Coordinator for Global/International Education, California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office, February 2000

"...International/global education has been on the California Community Colleges' agenda for at least 25 years, but its relative significance has changed importantly in the last few years. This change has many causes. One is that local colleges have come to realize that the "Community" identified in their mission statements no longer is confined to the limited geographical area they are charged to serve. Not only are local communities composed of growing numbers of immigrants whose culture and belief systems require understanding and regard, but also the economies of these communities are increasingly dependent on effective relationships with other countries. Further, the evolving structure of the workplace demands that teams of workers from different national and ethnic backgrounds perform harmoniously to achieve at a high level in order to be competitive. In addition, the just application of human services and emergency assistance requires a degree of international sensitivity not demanded in the past..."

"...The argument for international/global education programs exists on the human level, in economic terms, and on the civic plane."

Mission Statement, NCAGE, Vol. I, No. 1, May 8, 2000

"...Northern California Advocates for Global Education (NCAGE) is dedicated to strengthening the international role and responsibilities of postsecondary education in the service to society and in facilitating the involvement of **the private and public sectors** in the pursuit of these goals. It is motivated by the imperatives of an interdependent and multicultural world that increasingly demands its citizens possess **global awareness and competence**."

Indeed, discussions are underway to offer a Certificate of Global Competence at several California Community Colleges.

Canadian Association of University Teachers, Ottawa, Ontario

"...CAUT has long maintained the position that it is a moral and educational obligation of Canadians, as well as being in the best interests of Canada in both the short and the long term, to provide educational opportunities for foreign students."

It is well understood that enlightened self interest has been underrated as a means to a desirable end for all. Linking moral and educational obligations with the best interests of a nation should sound familiar.

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Oklahoma City, OK
William J. Clinton, April 29, 2000

"...It is the policy of the U.S. Federal Government to support international education. We are committed to:

- encouraging students from other countries to study in the United States;
- promoting study abroad by U.S. students'
- supporting the exchange of teachers, scholars, and citizens at all levels of society;
- enhancing programs at U.S. institutions that build international partnerships and expertise;
- expanding high-quality foreign language learning and in-depth knowledge of other cultures by Americans;
- preparing and supporting teachers in their efforts to interpret other countries and cultures for their students; and
- advancing new technologies that aid the spread of knowledge throughout the world.

The Federal Government cannot accomplish these goals alone. Educational institutions, State and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and the business community all must contribute to this effort."

Finally, those of us at 3,400 autonomous institutions have some moral support at the national level. The governments of the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada have long provided financial support to academic institutions in their efforts to attract international students and faculty, and to send their own students abroad. It's about time we got on the bandwagon. Let us not allow the sentiments expressed by a departing President die on the vine.

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley's address to the American Chamber of Commerce in Milan, Italy, May 2000

"...This is the first American initiative of its kind in the U.S. in over 35 years, and it **sends the world the signal that America is serious about becoming partners** with...every other nation to improve education for all peoples."

Undersecretary Evelyn S. Lieberman, U.S. Department of State, Office of Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, May 2000

"...Our cultures are the heart of our humanity. They give us our roots, they bind us to each other, and they are the key to peaceful growth and understanding. That is why we must find ways to increase significantly international education and the international understanding that it creates."

Fine words, indeed. If the above quotations do not move you to begin discussions of an institutional mission or policy statement, then consider an idea borrowed from a colleague at a California Community College:

Mission Statement printed on the back of all business cards, Sierra College, Rocklin, CA

"...At Sierra College We Facilitate Learning, Inspire Change and Build Community"

As was stated at the outset of this discussion, if you have a mission statement, don't hide it. Put it out there for the world to see.

CHAPTER 2

International Recruitment Principles and Practices

International students are playing an increasingly important role on U.S. campuses as more institutions recognize the intellectual, fiscal, and strategic benefits these students bring—enriching the academic experiences of U.S. students, contributing $12.3 billion to the U.S. economy[2], and as future alumni, promoting U.S. values and influence in an increasingly global and borderless world of interaction. According to the *Open Doors 1999/2000* annual report on international education, academic year 1999–2000 saw 514,723 international students enrolled in U.S. higher education programs, representing 3.8 percent of all postsecondary enrollments: 1.2 percent at the associate level, 2.7 percent at the baccalaureate level, and 12 percent at graduate levels.

Coupled with this growing awareness of the benefits in hosting international students, however, is the need to recognize the considerable competition institutions face from competitors in the U.S., from traditional as well as newer for-profit enterprises, and from higher education institutions in other countries. Gone is the day when most institutions could wait for the international student to find them. Competition among U.S. institutions is particularly fierce in some fields and in some geographic areas. Increased competition from abroad has been reported annually in *Open Doors*. In the 1980s the U.S. hosted 40 percent of all international students; currently the U.S. share is only 30 percent. The United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and others are competing vigorously in this market, often through efforts coordinated by their governments. As the U.S. (as of this writing) does not have a national policy on international education or a strategy for attracting international students, U.S. institutions are at a disadvantage. Colleges and universities are left on their own to forge policies and initiatives and to identify critical funding. Finally, while competition in students' home countries has always existed in some world regions, it is a growing phenomenon as efforts in a number of locations to build the capacity and quality of their institutions of higher education come to fruition. It is important to know that for some targeted pools of applicants, recruitment outreach needs to demonstrate the 'value added' quality of their institutions and the U.S. as a destination.

Establishing an international community and building upon it takes time. Institutions should not enter into the process naively expecting to see significant changes and jumps in enrollment within a short period of time. Each institution must assess how the international student population fits into the overall mission of the institution and its enrollment management plan. The goals may range from internationalizing and diversifying the overall student body to filling seats within a specific academic area or targeting students in a specific world area. Regardless of the enrollment goals, any institution needs to provide the institutional commitment and support services to address these student needs. (See Chapter 1—Institutional Mission Statements and Policy Considerations Regarding International Education.)

A strong recruitment plan will flow from a well-articulated vision of how international students will be incorporated into the institution. Ensuring the support of key players and policy makers on campus is important since colleges and universities should be prepared to commit the necessary funds for a minimum of three to five years before finally assessing results. Further, establishing a flexible plan is imperative as fiscal and political instability in a country or world area can affect efforts in untold ways.

Recruitment Principles

Before implementing or expanding an international recruitment program, understanding and adhering to good recruitment principles is critical. Statements of good principles have been developed by various organizations

[2] *Open Doors Report on International Exchange 1999/2000.* Davis, T.M., Institute of International Education. New York. 2000.

over the years. AACRAO's *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions* is reproduced in Appendix C of this book. NAFSA's *Principles for the Admission of Foreign Students* and *Principles for Institutions* can be found on their web site at www.nafsa.org. The following key principles drawn directly from these statements should prove useful:

- Admission goals and policies for foreign students should be related directly to overall institutional goals and policies.
- Admission materials should be sensitive to candidates' unfamiliarity with the U.S. education system and lack of facility in English.
- Information should be presented in a manner in which students can make informed academic judgments.
- Applications for admission and documentation of prior learning experiences should be evaluated by admission officers or credential evaluators trained to evaluate international applications and learning.
- Materials should provide a clear and accurate account of all costs for the academic year.
- Clear and complete explanations should be provided on all legal requirements governing their enrollment, including how to maintain their student status.

Recruitment Planning

Valuable Resources for Setting Goals and Mapping Strategies

Where do students come from? Where do they go? What do they study? And, why do they come? Staff responsible for the development, implementation, and assessment of an international enrollment strategy should avail themselves of resources that answer these questions. It is hard and, needless to say, expensive, to target the world; therefore, it is important to know who you want to target and what strategies will be most effective in reaching those populations. Strategies that work for the domestic population often do not yield the same results in the international market. A good starting point is to ask the current international population on campus or in the area what they looked for when they selected an institution. The information they provide can prove invaluable when designing effective, targeted outreach.

Current international students are all too frequently an untapped resource. Use them. Find out how they heard about U.S. institutions, why they came, what and who influenced their decisions, and how well their expectations have been met. Explore what their largest concerns were as they made their college decisions and what some of the biggest surprises were when they arrived. Separate data on international students from your current student admission and satisfaction surveys. Even more importantly, disaggregate the data from exit surveys. If international students are leaving or transferring before degree completion, discover why.

There are also valuable outside resources. For example, the **Cooperative Institutional Research Program** (CIRP), housed in the **Higher Education Research Institute** (http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri), conducts the nation's oldest and largest annual survey of higher education and effects of college on students. It disaggregated data on international students from its 1995 survey on why students enroll in college; the results were reported in *Open Doors 1995/96*. Although the findings are a bit dated, one fact discovered was that, while motivating factors for both domestic and international students were basically the same, the priority of a specific factor could vary greatly. For example, while "to get a better job" ranked first among domestic students' reasons to go to college, "to learn more about things" ranked first among international students. Sixty-two percent of international students ranked "good academic reputation" as their first priority in selecting a college. This reason also ranked first among domestic students but the percentage choosing it was 49 percent. "Graduates go to good graduate schools" ranked second among international students as opposed to ranking fifth among domestic students.[3] These data shed significant light on how to begin to craft a recruitment strategy and key messages. You must be able to identify and phrase your "selling points" in a way that will resonate with the intended population.

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[3] *Open Doors Report on International Exchange 1995/96*. Davis, T.M. Institute of International Education, New York. 1996.

Fortunately there are a number of valuable resources providing information on international student flows, mobility, and trends. Most resources provide formats that have evolved over time to yield the most accurate data. You can replicate these formats for your own data collection. In addition, some of these resources have mechanisms through which data can be downloaded and disaggregated for your own analysis, thus providing information from which to develop benchmarks, comparisons, and assessments.

The following sites, while by no means exhaustive, provide a wealth of information as well as useful links to additional information. (Additional web sites are listed at the end of this chapter.)

- **Council of Graduate Schools** (www.cgsnet.org): The Virtual Center for Research provides information on graduate enrollment and trends via tables and commentary.
- **Institute of International Education** (www.opendoorsweb.org): The Open Doors site provides data from its annual reports on international student mobility trends; some tables are downloadable.
- **National Center for Education Statistics/Integrated Postsecondary Data** (http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds): This site posts data and reports on postsecondary education enrollments and trends. By accessing the Peer Analysis System, an institution can compare its data with a group of peer institutions using selected variables.

Learn About Educational Systems

It is important to become knowledgeable about the educational systems in countries you would like to target. What is the academic cycle? This can be a determining factor for when recruiting efforts will have the greatest reach and impact. What degrees are offered? Are there majors or disciplines that are not as strong in a particular country and for whom students interested in such fields might be more attracted to studying abroad? Will your program and/or degree be recognized upon the student's return home? Will students be able to enter a graduate program in their home country or world region with your degree? At the graduate level will your degree be recognized as equivalent in their academic systems? How important is an end-of-degree thesis? If very important, do your programs either require a thesis or provide a thesis option?

There are a number of excellent resources that provide a wealth of information on educational systems; some are targeted to specific countries and some are targeted at world regions. Refer to the *World Education Series* published by the Projects for International Educational Research (PIER). This series includes both country studies and special reports providing extensive information on specific educational systems. Also refer to the *Country Guide Series* provided by AACRAO that provides data on a number of educational systems from lesser-known countries. You can find information on all of the above at http://www.aacrao.org/publications. (See Appendix B for additional resources on global educational systems.)

By doing the initial fact finding, you will be better able to anticipate the questions as well as the fears your target population might have. As Harry Beckwith states in his field guide to modern marketing, *Selling the Invisible*, "The best thing you can do for a prospect is eliminate her fear."[4] While the questions listed above are academic in nature, prospects might also have concerns about your size, your location, your reputation, your sports program, your diversity, etc. As much as possible anticipate these concerns and then formulate marketing messages and materials that will minimize a prospect's sense of risk.

Critical Campus Services and Resources

Recruiting and successfully enrolling students is but the first step of the process. Retaining them is the second and equally important step. Establishing or enhancing existing services will be necessary for an institution planning to increase significantly its international student population. In the planning process an assessment should be made of the existing resources on campus for international students. Are adequate numbers of personnel available to provide both for ongoing cross-cultural and academic adjustment needs as well as Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) regulation oversight? Does the college have a Designated

[4] *Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing.* Beckwith, H. Warner Books. New York. 1997.

School Office (DSO) authorized to sign required INS forms? Does this personnel handle strictly INS regulations or personal matters as well? Is this staff full-time? Does current staffing meet the needs of the international student body on campus now? Is there an English language bridge program or a fully developed intensive ESL program on the campus? Will either or both of these be necessary based on the language backgrounds and/or the caliber of students your college will attract? (See Chapter 10—English Proficiency and Admission Policy.)

Recruitment Practices

Effective marketing and recruitment can occur in a variety of modes—from the office as well as in the countries and world regions that are being targeted. This discussion starts with what is frequently called "armchair" recruiting. Remember that it is wise to maximize the institution's reach from the office before expanding to face-to-face recruitment in the targeted locales. The discussion then moves on to steps to be taken before traveling outside the U.S. and the opportunities, and occasional perils and pitfalls, in recruiting abroad.

Technology tools

The university web site

In today's market, developing an informative and effective web page is paramount if a college has any hope of keeping abreast with the competition. Both domestic and international students rely heavily upon the information they can access on the web. Not only is it free, but it is quick and can be more reliable than mail.

Establishing a web site for international applicants that is easy to find and uses clear terminology will save an institution countless hours in staff-time. Heading off those common questions that international students are prone to ask will free up an admission officer's time for more important and pressing tasks. Here are a few of the topics that must be included on the web site, ideally in one easy-to-reach location:

1. Contact information for the admission office: address, phone, fax, e-mail
2. Application deadline(s)
3. Documents required for applications (be very detailed in defining what is acceptable as an official transcript)
4. English proficiency requirements
5. SAT requirements
6. Policy on transfer applicants
7. Costs of attending your institution
8. International student financial aid policy
9. Web-enabled form(s) to request more information or to get onto your inquiry list
10. Easy links to the college application posted in a variety of formats—on-line, Word, and PDF

International students should be able to find information geared to them quickly and easily. Having an 'international student information' button or link on the home page or on the second screen of the university web site is important. Work with departments to ensure that a link to this information is easily found on their home pages. And, when appropriate, work with willing departments to develop appropriate messages targeted to international students for their web pages. Some institutions are providing links to electronic view books and virtual tours as well.

While developing your web site, keep in mind that downloading large images and impressive Java inserts can take time for slower modems around the world. Don't let your web site get bogged down in the bells and whistles. Have an option for viewing "text only." The Art & Science Group, Inc.'s Spring 2000 survey on student internet use in exploring colleges reported that speed and being cut off, as well as not

being able to find the information they are looking for, are major frustrations.[5] (See Chapter 4—Technology in the International Office.)

E-mail

E-mail can be your friend and your enemy. This means of communication can be a powerful marketing tool. Establishing a relationship with your applicants, guidance counselors, and overseas advisors can help to ensure a successful international admissions program. Personalized e-mail and prompt responses to applicants' questions will help to create an individual touch in the recruiting process. This approach can make all the difference when the international student must decide between your institution and Institution X.

However, the massive volume of e-mails received from international applicants can easily overwhelm the most efficient admission office, thus the importance of having a clear and concise web site as stated above. Since hiring more staff is generally not a feasible approach, a good technique for handling an increase in the volume of e-mails is to develop standard responses to frequently asked questions that can be cut and pasted or copied into your replies to applicants. This can dramatically reduce the time spent crafting individual replies to each student. You can also purchase auto-response software that will assist you in providing quick, accurate, but personal responses. And, don't forget to install a good anti-virus program.

Educational portals

A growing number of companies are using the internet to develop and market recruitment services and products aimed at both students and institutions. What they all have in common is the ability to help students quickly search and link. Some of these portal sites started out as on-line application services for domestic markets, but many have quickly expanded their products into helping institutions monitor inquiries, customize web sites, and reach a number of different markets, including the international market. Visit www.applyyourself.com and get tips on admissions trends, web design and technology. On www.gradschools.com, institutions can advertise and have a direct link to your school.

Some companies are offering "virtual guidance services" providing students with tips on: selecting colleges, searching for colleges, preparing for tests, anticipating costs, finding financial aid, getting visas, cultural adjustment, and some even link to 'live' counselors. Some sites provide institutions with student contacts whose profiles can be a good match. While much information is provided for free, the most useful services generally are for a fee. While there are a number of sites to explore, some highly interactive sites presenting a good sense of the breadth of services include: www.acuinfo.com (American Colleges and Universities), www.collegeboard.com, www.collegequest.com, www.collegenet.com, www.embark.com, www.educationconnect.com.

Other modes of web-based outreach

While a whole chapter could be devoted to making the most of internet opportunities and 'how to's' for building friendly and compelling web pages, time and space only allow for some general tips. Remember that a key goal is to maximize getting your site linked to other sites and search engines. In addition to exploring the opportunities provided by portals, make certain that your web pages have meta tags, the html coding that is necessary for your web site to be picked up by search engines. For more information on meta tags and search engines, go to www.eons.com/metatags.htm and www.searchenginewatch.com.

Visit the European Council of International Schools (www.ecis.org). Its higher education section contains two viewable and downloadable presentations by Allan and Nancy Maly—"College web sites and the recruitment of international students" and "The Internet—helping students help themselves." These presentations provide very good tips on developing web sites, e-mail use, and reports on students' internet use, and they list additional resources to find tips on design, style sheets, and search engines. (See Chapter 4—Technology in the International Office.)

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[5] *StudentPOLL*. Volume 4/Number 1. Art & Science Group, Inc. (www.artsci.com)

Multimedia: Videotapes/CD-Rom

An equally powerful tool for recruiting students overseas will be the use of some type of multimedia production. To produce a truly effective video or CD-Rom can be quite costly, which should give an admission office pause to weigh the benefits of these tools. Videos were once considered to be a necessary component for a college serious about recruiting international students, but with the birth of the internet and CD-Rom technology, one could argue that the video is no longer a cost-effective means for a college to promote itself. Moreover, one encounters the issue when dealing with distribution to different countries of which video formatting (PAL or NTSC) to use when mass-producing the final product.

CD-Rom has now become the preferred technology when producing a multimedia viewbook that can be distributed to prospects. It lends a great deal of flexibility in how information is presented and enables the audience to interact with the information. While they are expensive to produce, CD-Roms are inexpensive to replicate and distribute.

Print Publications

The world may be several years away from being a paperless society. Until that happens, admission offices will be obligated to develop printed publications to promote their college. Creating a publication specifically for international students should be among the first investments an admission office makes to begin its international recruiting efforts. Using clear and concise language and avoiding jargon, the international brochure should touch upon at least the following topics: location, mission, fields of study, cost, financial aid, housing options, and services.

Unless the publications used for U.S. applicants are deemed to be inappropriate for an international audience, developing an international brochure(s) that complements rather than replaces existing publications will be the most cost-effective way of designing material to be placed in a college's mailing sequence. To whatever extent possible, incorporate messages that will resonate with the targeted populations.

Carefully review the college catalog to ensure that admission criteria for international students are included and accurate. Keep in mind that, while this document is not primarily a recruitment instrument, it may well be the only publication retained on the shelves of government, school, and commercial counseling offices, and thus be one of the most influential documents in your recruiting process.

Also, don't forget to review all correspondence for appropriateness and consistency in approach: response to inquiry letters, acceptance letters, rejection letters, request for additional documentation, etc. Keep the verbiage clear, concise, and comprehensible.

Advertising and Data Services

In deciding where, when, and how often to advertise, a college or university must consider the number of international students it hopes to recruit from different regions of the world as well as the overseas travel schedule of its representative. The two major categories of publications are magazines and directories distributed free through schools and government counseling offices, and newspapers and magazines sold to prospective students in their country.

Study in the USA is a popular magazine distributed free in different editions to students in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The *American Colleges & Universities* is also distributed free worldwide. Major directories include *Peterson's Guide to Four-Year* Colleges and *Peterson's Guide to Two-Year Colleges, The Princeton Review, The Fiske Guide to Colleges,* and the International Education System's *Guide to American Schools, Colleges & Universities* and the Whitehall Press *Asian, European, and Middle East Education Yearbook.*

The purpose of advertising is twofold: To provide a source of information about your institution and to give prospective students a means to contact you for application materials. Advertising with a return card gives you a means to measure the number of prospective students you are reaching. Many advertisements will now include your e-mail address. The directories all provide ways in which students can respond either

directly or indirectly through questionnaires indicating their preferences. The directories also offer you, for an additional fee, the opportunity to describe your institution in greater detail than the normal listing.

Local advertising, either in newspapers or a fair directory, helps attract students to your display at a fair and/or to invite them to a seminar you are giving in a foreign city. Newspaper advertisements should be in the language of the country and give some *highlights* of your talk as well as the time and location of your seminar. You may have someone you know in the country write the local newspaper advertisements for your institution. Newspaper advertising can be expensive in big cities but is necessary to attract prospective students and their families.

In considering where to advertise and how much to spend, it is a good idea to get as much information as you can from your current international students on what publications they read in deciding to come to your college or university. Bear in mind, however, that the cost of placing the ad is only the beginning of the costs your institution will incur. A successful ad will generate many inquiries, thus driving up your mailing costs and the costs of publications. For a highly selective school, there is also the potential of attracting far more unqualified applicants as a result of the ad.

The results of advertising are difficult to measure except in the overall increase in your applications and enrollment of international students. Ultimately, the success of your advertising, as the success of all your recruitment efforts, will depend on the degree to which you are meeting the needs of your international students.

Travel Planning

Making the decision to travel abroad

Once an institution has assembled a long-range plan for international recruitment, ensured that the necessary support facilities are in place to accommodate these students, and maximized its outreach from the campus, overseas travel can be pursued. This should be one of the last steps in beginning a proactive recruiting program as this is potentially the most expensive component of the equation and the timeframe for contact is limited.

A great deal of thought and consideration should be put into this step to ensure that the institution makes the most of this investment. Here a are a few of the questions that will need to be addressed well in advance of purchasing the first international flight ticket:

1. Who will travel for the institution?
2. Where does it make the most sense for your institution to begin its overseas recruiting efforts?
3. Does it make more sense to travel in a group (big or small) or independently?
4. Is there a procedure in place to contact prospective students on your database, alumni, and college advisors prior to travel? Is there a follow-up procedure planned?

Who should travel

Upon first glance, the thought of traveling internationally to recruit students sounds like a glamorous job. While it is true that the person recruiting for the institution overseas will step foot in a multitude of countries, one should not forget that the average duration of a visit in any one country during a recruiting trip will be approximately 36-48 hours; hardly a holiday. Some of the traits that an international recruiter should possess are: flexibility, open-mindedness, a good sense of humor, good health, and a significant amount of patience. Experience living in a foreign country is ideal but not necessary. The same could be said of the knowledge of a foreign language. Both can help take the edge off of international travel, but having lived in France and being fluent in French offers only limited advantage to the recruiter in China.

Clearly the individual will need to be thoroughly up to date on their institution's admission procedures and financial aid policies for international and U.S. applicants. Imperative will be that the recruiter can speak effectively, in plain and easy to understand English, about his or her institution's academic programs, living environment, and support services for students coming from abroad.

Rudimentary knowledge of the host-country's educational system is advisable. Likewise, basic knowledge of U.S. immigration regulations can be useful in some cases.

Where to travel

Deciding where to plan the first trip may be a daunting one. This decision will require that the institution perform a self-examination before a decision can be reached. Do we offer financial aid to non-U.S. citizens? Can we provide assistance for those with limited English skills? What academic programs do we offer? Are we recruiting to achieve diversity or to fill seats? Does our institution already have an established link with certain foreign countries? Do we already have alumni in certain countries that can assist us? Once those answers have been tabulated, cross referencing with the *Open Doors* annual report on international education will help to guide the international recruiter in setting an itinerary.

Group vs. individual travel (pros and cons)

There are a variety of modes in which colleges and universities can recruit overseas. There are institution fairs, tour groups targeted to large groups of up to 50 schools or smaller groups of two to ten, and individual travel. What is right for your institution will depend upon several variables: How much experience does your institution representative have traveling overseas? Does your institution have the name recognition to travel independently or in a small group? What type of financial resources is the institution willing to commit to overseas travel? Are the tours that are available traveling to the countries best suited for your institution?

Even the most experienced international recruiter from a highly reputable institution may find that the conveniences of traveling with a tour group far outweigh the benefits of independent travel. One of the great luxuries of traveling with a tour group is that virtually the entire recruiting trip will be planned for you. Some tour groups will even mail country profile information and travel tips to you in advance of the trip. Plus, you can travel with seasoned veterans and learn from them.

For some, the drawbacks of traveling with a group may be reason enough to take on the task of planning their own, personally tailored international recruiting trip. Traveling in large numbers will severely limit the amount of time one can spend with college advisors and prospective students. Larger groups by nature tend to move more slowly from one school to the next. And perhaps most importantly, when you buy into a tour, you are purchasing a predetermined itinerary that may not be the best combination of countries and schools for your college to visit.

Without question, the task of planning your own tour is time-intensive and requires a significant amount of knowledge of countries and schools you wish to visit. The process of planning the tour does, however, provide you with opportunities to make contacts with college advisors. It also gives you a great deal more flexibility in your recruiting efforts, ensuring that you spend more time with alumni and parents of current students in the cities where it really counts.

Actions to take prior to travel

Regardless of whether an institution decides to travel alone or in a group, there are a few basic steps that should be taken to ensure that the recruiting trip has the potential for success. Sending letters to the prospective students on the database will give those who have already expressed an interest in your institution the opportunity to meet with the recruiter and gain a personal contact. Offering interviews is time consuming but is the best way to leave a lasting impression on a prospective applicant.

Informing the international students already on your campus of your itinerary can also result in unexpected results. They may inform a friend or a relative in their hometown who is planning to study in the U.S. of your impending visit. Or you may gain the opportunity to meet with the parents of current students, a very appreciated service in most cultures that can foster good relations with the institution.

Alumni should also be contacted if there is time for you to meet with them (more about receptions below). They can also be of great assistance if you are attending a large college fair or even visiting schools.

College advisors of the schools and agencies you will visit also should be sent a reminder of your visit. Providing them with a poster announcing your impending arrival will aid them in informing their students and advisees of the opportunity to meet with you.

College fairs

A quick and easy way to access a large crowd of prospective students is to attend one of the numerous college fairs that take place around the world. For many years the Institute of International Education (IIE) has been conducting fairs in most major cities in Asia. These fairs are reasonably priced, very well attended in most cases, and are chronologically arranged to enable institutions to sequentially attend all of the fairs in a reasonable timeframe. Fulbright and the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) also organize fairs annually in many cities in Europe.

In recent years there have been several fairs organized in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia by commercial companies. These fairs can also be very well attended, but the cost of attending can be substantially higher than the fairs mentioned above. Moreover, some of these fairs may also include universities from other countries, thus attracting prospective students to the fair who may have no intention of coming to the United States for their studies.

One should note that attending large college fairs does not guarantee large returns. A fair that is attended predominantly by students seeking MBA programs will yield limited results for a liberal arts college. Or a school that is just beginning to establish a name for itself outside the U.S. may find that it is quickly overlooked when it is but one of 150 colleges in a fair. It is a good idea to acquire a listing of recent fair participants from which to gauge potential impact. Ask for recommendations and consult colleagues in the field.

Tours

For an institution with little international name recognition that is just beginning to recruit overseas, traveling with a well-organized recruiting tour could be the best first step. This is especially true for the institution representative who has not recruited overseas before. Tour durations can be two to five weeks long and generally include hotel and travel arrangements, high school visits, college fairs in schools and hotels, and visits to advising offices.

There are several reputable tour organizations to choose from that travel to virtually every corner of the world. Not all tour groups are created equal, and even a reputable tour group may not be appropriate for your school's needs. Some tour groups focus their efforts on recruiting undergraduates while others cater to the MBA schools. Again, ask for recommendations and consult colleagues in the field before committing to a tour group.

Receptions and seminars

Representatives from colleges or universities with a significant number of international students find it is productive to arrange receptions for their alumni and parents in major cities. These receptions are usually held in hotels, but they do not require expensive catering. An audiovisual presentation followed by a question and answer session with coffee or tea is sufficient. Parents particularly appreciate the opportunity to talk to a representative of the college their son or daughter may attend.

Some representatives also invite prospective students to an open seminar on U.S. higher education. It is important for students of other countries to understand the structure of the U.S. system of education and the opportunities it offers before they can realistically choose a college or university in the U.S. Representatives find that the time and effort required to present these seminars is a very good investment in terms of attracting appropriate students.

Government agencies

Make every effort to include a trip to the consular office of the U.S. Embassy or U.S. Consulate in the cities being visited. You can have a very successful recruitment trip, acquire many inquiries and applicants, but if after being admitted to your institution the students cannot acquire the F-1 or J-1 visa necessary to travel to the U.S, your efforts will have been useless. If your school is not well-known, it is especially critical that you visit the embassy. Introduce yourself, leave material about your school and its programs, stress the accreditations your institution holds. You want to avoid leaving the perception that you are a diploma mill. This perception can be drawn when a school that has had no students requesting student visas suddenly has several appearing at the consular office for the same term. Some types of institutions have more problems with students acquiring visas than others. For example, some students are denied visas due to bias against two-year institutions. Another type of situation can occur if the country in which you are recruiting has a high incidence of students not returning at the completion of their studies. In that case, you want to go armed with information on how you will encourage and track student return. In this latter case it is a good idea to get advice from the foreign student adviser on your campus.

Stateside, when possible you should visit the embassies and consulates of your targeted countries. They are a valuable resource on information on the educational system and can sometimes open additional recruiting opportunities for you. Visit agencies and embassies in Washington, D.C. and New York that administer scholarship programs for foreign students.

Overseas educational centers

There are nearly 450 worldwide OSEAS (Overseas Educational Advisers) Centers in over 150 different countries. They share a central mission, to provide educational advising services on study in the U.S. As stated in the College Board's *Directory of Overseas Educational Advising Centers*, "Advisers often serve as the first point of contact for prospective overseas students, guiding them through the maze of career counseling, college search, testing, admissions procedures, financial aid and orientation."[6] This makes these centers and these advisers an invaluable resource to U.S. universities. In 1999, they collectively counseled 4 million students on educational opportunities in the U.S.[7]

Though they can be housed in a variety of locations—Fulbright Commissions, U.S. embassies, local universities, private foundations, binational commissions, and non-profit organizations—Overseas Educational Centers are often funded by the U.S. Department of State's Education Information and Resources Branch of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. They sometimes have joint sponsorship from the host country. Frequently these centers are the only source for prospective students to learn about educational opportunities in the U.S. While often under-funded and overworked, they provide an invaluable service to U.S. higher education.

In addition to acting as a gateway to prospective students, they can be a primary resource for you on educational trends and patterns of queries in their countries. They can help you maximize your networking efforts by directing you to resources, such as contacts in ministries of education, universities interested in student exchanges, and fair and publication opportunities. While they cannot actively recruit on behalf of a specific college or university, they do display university information. It is best to contact them by e-mail or phone to see what types of materials they prefer—viewbooks, CD-Roms, etc. Visit them when you are visiting the country. Advisers are very interested in promoting communication, cooperation, and collaboration with U.S. universities.

A fairly complete listing of Centers with contact information is provided in the *Directory of Overseas Educational Advising Centers* available from The College Board. You can also access information on the NAFSA website at www.nafsa.org/oseas/contact/html.

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[6] *Directory of Overseas Educational Advising Centers 2000.* Farhat, J., ed., The College Board & U.S. Department of State. Washington, D.C. 2000.

[7] Ibid.

Commercial consultants

Perhaps no aspect of recruitment receives more scrutiny than relationships with commercial recruiting agents or, as they prefer to be called, educational consultants. A major point of criticism is the fees that these consultants charge for their services. Traditionally, it was considered bad form to pay such fees. However, as Joann Stedman points out in her article "Working with agents in international student recruitment," this kind of negative attitude "reflects a limited perspective and may sell our international colleagues short.... There is nothing unethical about contracting with third parties to represent your university as long as the representation is consistent with good recruitment practices and the ethical principles..."[8]

Reputable consultants earn their fees by matching the interests and academic levels of students to the institutions best suited for them. A reputable consultant should help students identify a range of accredited colleges and universities that meet the criteria decided on by students and their parents. Therefore, be cautious of consultants who ask to be the exclusive representative of your college in a particular city or country. This is not a good idea for either your institution or the consultant.

A good consultant can translate and explain information about your institution to the parents and students. He or she can help students with visa problems, transportation, and housing. Use of educational consultants as intermediaries is an accepted practice in some world areas, especially Asia. It is not so widespread or acceptable in Europe. One of the best ways to find a reputable consultant is to ask for recommendations from other colleges and universities.

Consultants can place advertisements in local papers, serve as a postal address for receiving recruitment materials, and help at education fairs, particularly in answering questions of parents who may not understand English. They can provide services such as making hotel and travel arrangements and taking telephone reservations for seminars and receptions.

Be wary of agents who want to collect your tuition and fees for you. Ask for a copy of the information they are giving students and check their references, both within their country and with other colleges they are representing. It is an accepted practice in many countries for agents to include their commission in the amount they collect from students. Be sure that the students are made aware that this commission is their payment for services from the agent.

Consultants should be paid for their services according to a budget agreed to in advance by the institution. Amounts can vary greatly depending on the services provided. While many charge fees directly to the student, contracts with institutions where fees are charged to the university should clearly define type of payment, currency in which payment is to be made, and by what arrangement: set amount of money over a period of time or for specific services, head count fee, percentage of tuition paid to university, etc. Some arrangements are more problematic than others; so, put much thought and careful definitions into the contract. Joann Stedman's article in the Spring 1999 issue of NAFSA's *International Educator* is an excellent reference providing numerous tips on best utilizing agents as well as pitfalls to avoid.

University contacts

Don't overlook using university faculty, administrators, and students as part of your outreach—current students who may be on a study abroad experience, faculty who may be on a sabbatical or summer research sojourn, and your alumni. They can connect with prospects in a very powerful way. Remember that positive 'word-of-mouth' is just as critical with your international prospects as it is with your domestic ones. However, all individuals who are representing your institution should be working from the same assumptions. Providing key tips and points to stress as well as a list of "don'ts" is critical. Arm them with material. One of the most serious pitfalls is that a well-meaning, but uninformed, institutional representative unintentionally makes a promise that can't be kept.

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[8] *Working with agents in international student recruitment,* **International Educator.** Spring 1999. NAFSA. Washington, D.C.

Faculty can be a powerful, and cost-effective, networking resource. They are often in a position to meet future prospects on campuses or to expose host country faculty to the merits of your programs who then can recommend your university to their students. However, it is critical that they not promise admission to students or unintentionally lead students to believe that they can come and study without first applying.

Should your president or deans or provosts be traveling in a country from which you currently draw a number of students, it is a good idea to have them host a reception for the parents of these students; you can invite alumni and/or future students as well. The very presence of a senior administrator strongly demonstrates a commitment by your institution to that country. Although it is fairly uncommon, some colleges have even conducted graduation ceremonies for students in the home country so that relatives can attend.

Current students on a study abroad experience can be a great contact and resource for students who have applied to your school or have already been admitted. They can provide first hand information about life on campus, answer questions, and, if they are willing, be a contact for the student when he or she arrives. Most institutions have found that unless your student representative has had some prior recruiting or admission experience, it is best to use them as a contact with students that have already made some type of commitment to your university rather than as a resource for prospective applicants.

If you do not have students studying abroad in the targeted country, current students still can be utilized by having them write letters or send e-mails to newly admitted students, welcoming them to the college. International students are often very apprehensive about what life will be like and how they will fit in; so, they are eager to receive this kind of contact. Similarly, current students can be used in e-mail chat rooms to share their experiences and provide information on the institution.

Alumni are another critical resource. With training, they can interview prospects on your behalf, represent your institution at college fairs, prepare advertisements and news releases in the native language, and volunteer to be an in-country resource for prospective students.

Back in the U.S.

Effective follow-up

After returning from your overseas recruiting trip and the data from the inquiry cards collected while on the road have been entered, a simple but personalized letter should be sent to all the students you met. Be sure to send with the letters the necessary admissions materials to entice the students to apply. A short letter of thanks should also be sent to all college advisors and alumni met while traveling.

By coding the inquiry cards collected from your trip with a unique code, you will be able to track the success of your recruiting efforts. This will also enable you to do future focused mailings if you want to send a future mailing to those you met on the trip.

U.S.-based local markets

As you attend to your overseas outreach, don't overlook international students in local markets. Many students first enter the U.S. by enrolling in intensive English programs. Often they come to the U.S. not only to improve their English skills but also to investigate higher education opportunities. Contact area language programs. Ask to come and speak to their advanced-level classes.

Tap into the high school exchange population. While they may not be interested in immediately enrolling in a U.S. college, familiarizing them with your institution and providing them with information that they might take back home and give to brothers, sisters, cousins, or other family members can end up yielding good 'word-of-mouth,' greater visibility for you, and potential prospects. Rotary clubs and other community organizations can also be good for outreach. Four-year programs can target international students completing their associate degrees or graduate programs can target international undergraduates. The idea is to raise your visibility, increase the number of inquiries, distribute information, and then effectively track your prospects.

Resources

The information that follows is by no means exhaustive nor are any of these sites or commercial agencies being endorsed.

Useful Web Sites for Information on International Admissions, Educational Systems, and a Variety of Other Information

- American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) www.aacrao.org
- America-Mideast Educational and Training Services (AMIDEAST): www.amideast.org
- College Board: www.collegeboard.com
- Council of Graduate Schools: www.cgsnet.org
- Educational Testing Service (ETS): www.ets.org
- Embassy information: www.embassy.org and www.embassyweb.com
- European Council of International Schools (ECIS): www.ecis.org
- Higher Education Research Institute: http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/heri.html
- Institute of International Education (IIE): www.iie.org
- International Education Forum: www.csc.fi/forum/
- Money Conversion Table: http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic
- NAFSA: Association of International Educators: www.nafsa.org
- National Center for Education Statistics: http://nces.ed.gov
- National Library of Education/USNEI: http://www.ed.gov/NLE/USNEI/
  Central repository providing information on educational systems around the world
- Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): www.toefl.org
- UNESCO: www.unesco.org
- Universities Worldwide: http://geowww.uibk.ac.at/univ/
  Searchable database of worldwide university websites
- World Fact Book: http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook

Marketing and Internet Resources

- Art and Science Group, Inc.: www.artsci.com
- Global Reach: www.glreach.com
- Meta Tags: www.eons.com/metatags.htm
- Search Engine Watch: www.searchenginewatch.com
- Stamats: www.stamats.com
- Web Reference: www.webreference.com/greatsite.html

Student Search Services

- College Board: www.collegeboard.com
  Select students by geographic region through its student search service.
- European Council of International Schools (ECIS) Registry Service: www.ecis.org/colleges/registry.htm
  Custom order lists by score ranges, GPA, high school rank, language, and financial aid status.
- Peterson's, Inc.: http://www.petersons.com/services/marketing
  Provides educational mailing lists and services through its international network services.

Mailing Services

- DHL Worldwide Express: www.dhl.com or phone 800-225-5345
- Global Mail: 800-545-8794
- Johnson & Hayward Postal Links International: 800-521-0080
- Mailfast: 800-868-2676
- TNT Skypak (TNT Mailfast) 800-944-4321
- United States Express Mail International Service: 800-222-1811
- United States Postal Service, International: www.usps.gov or phone 800-222-1811
- UPS: www.ups.com or phone 800-228-3552, ext. 909
- World Distribution Services, Inc.: 800-356-4467

Useful Texts and Articles

- AACRAO
  Country Guides
  The World Education Series
- ***College web sites and recruitment of international students.*** Maly, A&N. European Council of International Schools. Fall 1999 presentation.
- **International Marketing: a Cultural Approach.** Usunier, C. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall (1995)
- **International Recruitment Kit, Revised 1998**. College Board, New York, New York. Provides a broad overview of key networks for communicating with prospective college applicants. Can view first two chapters at the College Board web site.
- ***The Internet—helping students help themselves.*** Maly, A&N. European Council of International Schools. Fall 2000 presentation.
- **NAFSA's Guide to International Student Recruitment**. O'Hara, Raftus, Stedman, eds. Washington, D.C. NAFSA (2000)
- ***Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange 2000***. Davis, T. New York, New York, Institute of International Education (2001)
- ***Working with agents in international student recruitment.*** **International Educator.** Spring 1999. NAFSA. Washington, D.C.

Training Opportunities

- **AACRAO**
  - Frequent Summer Institutes on International Admissions (co-sponsored by AACRAO and College Board—geared to beginners)
  - Skill Enhancement Opportunities (geared to mid-level and above; week-long intensive internship experiences at AACRAO)

- **NAFSA** Professional Development Workshops
  - Foundation Workshop in Foreign Educational Credentials Analysis
  - Building an International Admissions Office
  - Graduate Admissions
  - Marketing and Recruitment for Admissions Offices and Intensive English Programs

- **WES** Workshops for International Education Professionals
  - Recruiting International Students
  - Developing an Effective International Enrollment Program

CHAPTER 3

The International Admission Office: Policies, Procedures, and Processes

Introduction

The admission office in any higher education setting is generally a busy place, with a large volume of information to process, pending deadlines, and many goals and benchmarks to reach. Admission officers and support staff play a critical role in helping their institutions achieve enrollment and revenue goals. This task is compounded by the fact that all applicants are considered "fair game" and other institutions are constantly maneuvering to attract prospective students to their campus. Competition for students creates the necessity for all institutional components to provide the best quality service possible. Since the admission office is usually the first point of contact for prospective students, the concepts of efficiency, quality, and accuracy are magnified.

In addition to these considerations, some admission offices must also incorporate an international component into the office regimen. Applications are on the rise from prospective students who have completed some or all of their education outside the United States. In 1999, more than 500,000 international students were enrolled in institutions of higher education in the United States. The international student "industry" contributes more than $10 billion annually to the U.S. economy (for additional statistics and information see Chapter 2—International Recruitment Principles and Practices). International applicants represent a vast pool of prospective students, many of outstanding quality and promise. As a result, many admission officers find themselves navigating, often suddenly and blindly, through the unique realm of international admission. But this realm need not seem so esoteric and nebulous.

This chapter will help define the scope and substance of international admission processing, from inquiry to enrollment. Ideas for policies, procedures, and processes will be offered so that an admission officer faced with international application processing will be able to maintain quality, efficiency, and accuracy.

Initial Considerations

It is important to remember that international applicants are a unique population and require special handling that domestic applicants do not. With this in mind, you can begin to get a sense of the scope of international admission processing and its place in the admission office structure. But there are several important issues that must also be considered.

Mission Statement. The very fact that your office is responsible for international admission processing proves that your institution values the presence of international students on campus. In order to more fully appreciate the role of the admission office in bringing these students to campus, review your institution's mission statement, especially as it relates to international education. Then use this during staff training to give the entire office a sense of mission and purpose. (See Chapter 1—Institutional Mission Statement and Policy Considerations Regarding International Education.)

Equality. The admission process for international applicants must be similar to that of the domestic application process insofar as practice and policy are concerned. Inconsistency in the international admission process not only does a disservice to the applicant, but also has the very real potential of damaging your institution's reputation abroad.

Marketing. For most admission offices, marketing materials include view books, pamphlets, catalogues, and the application for admission. You should ask yourself how appropriate these materials are for an

international audience. A review of your marketing materials will help determine if they need to be updated for international applicants. You might also consider creating separate marketing materials designed specifically for an international audience.

Training. The processing of international applications will require a bit of training throughout the office. All staff will benefit from cross-cultural training as they get used to dealing with a more international clientele. Data entry staff will need to learn about international academic credentials in order to properly enter information into the student information database. Evaluating international credentials to determine degree or transfer credit equivalency requires continual training. Any training program should take into consideration the uniqueness of international admission processing and therefore should be thorough and easily digestible.

Resources. The evaluation of international academic credentials requires access to a library of resources with information on educational systems around the world. While there are many books and articles available, a significant amount of information is easily available on the World Wide Web. The Appendices at the back of this publication list resources available in international education.

Institutional Research. Performing some research on your applicant pool can help you better target your resources. Review your application statistics over the past few years in order to identify any trends with regard to international applications. You will get a better sense of the countries and regions from which you receive the most applications and you can plan accordingly. Another research method is to interview current international students on campus. Whether a written survey or an in-person interview, canvassing your current international population will allow you to hear the positive and negative experiences so that you can make adjustments to the process if necessary.

Staff development. As you and your staff adjust to the unique requirements for processing international applications, do not lose sight of the fact that staff development is essential in maintaining quality and efficiency. Staff should participate in regular training to keep skills sharpened. Local, regional, and national conferences of such organizations as AACRAO and NAFSA are an excellent way for staff to learn the latest trends in the field of international education. In addition, networking with colleagues in the field will allow staff to share "war stories" and learn from their peers.

Sense of humor. This is a critical component in any undertaking. Without a sense of humor, we may often feel as though the weight of the world is upon our shoulders. While we should approach the processing of international applications with the seriousness it deserves, we should not forget to smile and laugh along the way.

Understanding the Difference: Domestic vs. International Admission

Before delving into the specifics of processing international applications, let us first consider, thematically, the basic differences between domestic admission and international admission. This brief discussion will help establish a "mindset" conducive to working with international applications.

If anything is ever the same, it is that nothing is ever the same. This popular statement is appropriate for a discussion on international admission, which is more complex and diverse than domestic admission. Domestic admission can be somewhat rote; education in the United States is fairly standardized. Transcripts indicate courses with titles that describe the base content of the courses. Math isn't just mathematics, instead we usually know that a course is calculus, pre-calculus, trigonometry, algebra, or geometry. Syllabuses are also fairly standard, where high school chemistry in New York will educate to the same level and content as high school chemistry in Arizona.

With international admission, course comparisons become more difficult as many students will be unable to provide course syllabuses, and transcripts may not indicate courses with descriptive titles. A math course may simply say mathematics, or simply list history; content may remain a mystery.

Through training, practice, and the use of resources, we may gain some understanding of particular foreign educational systems, but there are departures from educational patterns, varied and confusing transcript formats, and exceptions to the 'rule.' These exceptions, changes in pattern, revisions in the educational systems and structure of many countries, are why 'nothing is ever the same.' We are confronted with new experiences and examples, and new educational institutions everyday. And with these new experiences and changes, we often have little background information to aid us in decision making. But this is the nature of a dynamic world. Education variance and reform is part of our world, and in part what makes international admission unique, interesting, and even exciting. Like learning a new language, processing international applications may seem strange and even uncomfortable at first. But time, practice, a little patience, and a sense of humor will soon have you feeling comfortable and more confident.

Serving the International Prospective Applicant

Prospective international applicants are a unique group and will require that your current processes and procedures be modified slightly as you incorporate this important group into your office regimen. From the initial inquiry until the point of enrollment in your institution, there are specific issues and concerns related to international students. Planning ahead will allow your office to provide quality service with accuracy and efficiency to this group.

Inquiries

Response time for inquiries is one of the measures prospective students will often use to gauge the student service quality of an institution. It is therefore important for an admission office to have a system that allows and encourages rapid response. But responding to inquiries can often times seem like a full time job, especially when responding to international inquiries. A few simple measures can help assure that responding to inquiries is not a full-time job.

The World Wide Web has become the primary method used by international students to research U.S. institutions. With a few clicks, prospective students from nearly every corner of the world can "visit" your institution. The information on your site, therefore, should provide answers to as many questions as possible. In addition, making the application for admission downloadable via your web site will save your office time and mailing costs. For more information on web sites and technology, see Chapter 4 – Technology in the International Office.

Another popular method of inquiry for prospective international students is e-mail. Responding to e-mail inquiries can be rather daunting, especially during peak times. Because of the varying levels of technology around the world, prospective international students may send more than one e-mail inquiry if they do not receive a response fairly quickly. Your e-mail program should allow for an automated response explaining turnaround time and perhaps answering any frequently asked questions. In addition, your e-mail response should instruct prospects to visit your web site for more immediate information.

Informational Materials for International Students

Informational materials for international students should address the specific needs and requirements pertaining to this population, as well as general university information. The goal is to provide pertinent information and gather application information that is unique to international students, while ensuring that the international student receives information that shows all opportunities available for full participation in campus and community life.

The materials must be welcoming and easily understood. Information pieces should indicate not only information about the university, but should address the importance of international students and scholars in the academic setting and in the community at large. The educational institution's mission and goals as they pertain to international students should be stated. This statement will show advocacy for international students, which is a holistic approach, rather than an approach motivated by financial reasons. In addition,

a mission statement that includes an emphasis on recruiting international students shows that an institution welcomes the infusion of different ideas and new approaches brought into the classrooms, research laboratories, student organizations, and community.

The multicultural and cross-cultural education and living experience benefits not only the domestic students, university, and community, but can also make an impact on the international student. Students share ideas and culture with classmates, faculty, and members of the community, but they also learn from other international students and faculty in addition to their new found U.S. friends. Informational materials that clearly show the value of having international students on campus and in the local community have the potential to generate a significant amount of interest among prospective international students.

Information to Include for an International Audience

The following is a list of important information that will be of interest to international students:

- school specifics, such as mission, history, public or private, size, location
- highlights about the school's international focus, i.e. sister institutions, exchange agreements, international and Fulbright scholars on campus
- detailed list of academic programs and degrees offered
- examples of quality programs and nationally recognized faculty
- information about student services, such as housing and meal plans, on-campus and off-campus health services, student activities and organizations, tutoring, and learning center
- community information, such as local popular activities, shopping, entertainment, history, points of local and regional interest
- financial information, such as yearly cost of tuition and living expenses
- scholarships for international students, assistantships, on-campus employment
- application deadlines

The goal of these informational materials is to turn an inquiry into an application. Therefore the materials should be as clear and concise as possible while showing the international applicant that the institution values the presence of international students and supports them when they arrive.

Application Requirements: Be Clear, Be Concise, Be Specific

Application requirements can be included in a general brochure or included in a separate packet with the application form. Good detailed definitions are a must, so the international student has clear understanding of the requirements. This clarity will help to prevent numerous communications with a student who wants more detail for better understanding. If application packets are complete upon initial receipt, processing and evaluation time is not lost while waiting for missing information and documents. The information to collect from applicants may vary slightly from institution to institution, but the following list is fairly common:

- completed and signed application for admission
- application fee (a more appropriate term is 'processing/evaluation fee')
- transcripts, mark sheets, exam results, completion certificate (diploma, degree, etc.)—be sure to specify what constitutes an 'official' document
- English translations of all documents listed above—be sure that you define what constitutes an 'official' translation
- English language requirements: approved testing vehicles and minimum scores required, i.e. TOEFL, MELAB, APIEL, etc.
- Aptitude test results for undergraduate applicants, i.e. ACT, SAT I, SAT II
- Graduate admission tests results, i.e. GMAT, GRE, MAT, LSAT, MCAT

- Financial requirements: completed financial affidavit by sponsor (promise of financial support), official bank statement and letter from the sponsors financial institution (if required at the time of application)
- Statement of purpose, resume, portfolio
- Letters of recommendation

Application Forms

The application for admission will be the most important form an international applicant will receive from your institution. Therefore it must be clear and concise and gather only the most pertinent information. Balancing brevity with legitimate and necessary questions is the key to a well-constructed admission application.

An institution may elect to create a separate application for international students, or one application may be used for all students. Regardless of the format, the application should request the following basic information:

- *Name.* In some countries, the standard practice is to place the family name before the given name, or use only the family name. The application should use the terms "family name" and "given name" to avoid confusion for the applicant and the data entry staff.
- *Date of Birth.* This identifier will help distinguish applicants with the exact same name.
- *Gender.* This is not always obvious from the name.
- *Complete Address.* Your database should allow for more address lines than are needed for domestic addresses.
- *Desired Term of Study.* Be specific with regard to restrictions, such as Fall-only start terms.
- *Desired Degree Level.*
- *Desired Academic Program.*
- *Complete Academic History.* Maintaining information on the previously attended institutions of your applicants provides an excellent source of data for recruitment purposes and helps you better understand your applicant pool.
- *Applicant's signature.*

In addition to requesting this basic information, the admission application should also clearly explain which supporting documentation is required to complete the application. These include letters of recommendation, required examination results, financial certification, and most important, academic transcripts. With regard to transcripts, very clearly state your institution's policy regarding what constitutes an official transcript, mark sheet, or examination result. You should also explain your policy regarding official English-language translations. Finally, explain your policy regarding incomplete applications. This will help alleviate frantic phone calls and e-mails to your office.

Depending on the format of your admission application, additional forms may help international applicants more easily and readily provide the necessary information. Consider including the following additional forms with your application packet:

- financial affidavit form
- recommendation form(s)
- scholarship and financial assistance applications (not to be confused with the FAFSA used for applying for U.S. federal financial aid)
- graduate assistantship application
- information release form, to allow sponsoring agencies to monitor academic progress; or to allow for the work of family intermediaries

Processing Procedures

Processing international applications requires a solid understanding of the processes and procedures for processing domestic applications. This is important because of the necessity to maintain consistency. Written policies and procedures pertaining to admission requirements and quality standards will help assure that consistency is maintained. Rarely, however, is international and domestic admission an 'apples-to-apples' comparison. Be consistent as much as you can, but understand the need for exceptions and flexibility. Each of us must look at the standards, policies, and procedures at our individual institutions, but pay heed to recommendations and prevailing opinion that come from within our profession. In other words, do not be afraid to use common sense and professional judgment; international admission is not an exact science.

Creating a Processing Manual

A processing manual should be developed to insure standardized processing. The following is a list of important areas that a manual should address:

- date stamping received materials
- processing application fees
- detailed procedures on data entry
- instructions on conducting name searches, discussion about name variations, and DOB verification to facilitate matching documents to files
- discussion on official documentation as it pertains to transcripts, translations, bank statements, and bank letters
- entry of test scores such as TOEFL, ACT, SAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.; minimum acceptable scores
- file completion and preparation for academic evaluation
- timely correspondence, as it pertains to acknowledgement of application received, notification of missing documents, unmet requirements, and admission decisions
- the importance of the I-20's in the admission process
- orientation, housing, registration information

Once the international application is received, it should be processed according to the same policies and procedures applied to domestic applications. The most significant challenge for staff members who process applications is determining whether or not an international application is complete. Academic documents from abroad look vastly different than domestic credentials. While English translations should be included, processing staff may still become concerned or confused. In order to prevent bottlenecks in the processing stage, processing staff should allow the international credential evaluators in the office to determine the completeness of the application in terms of academic credentials.

Evaluating International Academic Credentials

Once the application is deemed complete, it is ready to be evaluated. The evaluation of international academic credentials to determine U.S. academic equivalency is probably the most feared aspect of processing international applications. Most people believe that one must possess vast knowledge about foreign educational systems and years worth of experience to evaluate international credentials. While this area does require some understanding of other systems of education, even the experts in the field had to start with little or no knowledge. In addition, the field of international academic credential evaluation is filled with colleagues who are more than willing to share advice and answer questions for newcomers.

The important consideration for the international admission office is how best to perform the credential evaluation process. Depending on the volume of international applications and the number of staff in the office, one of the following models may work for your particular office.

- The International Expert. One staff member handles the evaluation of all international applications. This model generally works best for an office with a lower volume of international applications.
- Country/Regional Specialists. In this model, several staff members become country or region specialists. Applications are divided by country or region and the staff specialist for the country/region performs the evaluation. One of the drawbacks to this model is the lack of cross training. If the Asia expert is out of the office for an extended period of time, who will perform those evaluations?
- Alphabetical. International evaluations are divided by the first initial of the applicant's last name. Several staff members are responsible for a range of the alphabet. This model implies that all staff members involved in evaluation will learn all systems and regions.
- Discipline. This model works well in a graduate admission setting. The caseload of evaluations is divided by discipline. For example, depending on the range of programs your office handles, sciences, social sciences, humanities, and business can be four distinct disciplines. This model allows for cross training and specialization at the same time. In addition, evaluators become more familiar with institutions and programs within foreign institutions.

Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 of this publication offer extensive information on the various aspects of international academic credential evaluation.

Communicating With Your Applicants

Once the application is in the system, your institution has a responsibility to communicate with the applicant. Most student systems allow these communications to be prepared in the form of boilerplate form letters, in which most of the text is the same for all applicants.

Typically the first document an applicant receives during the admission process is an acknowledgment of the application. This can be a letter or simply a postcard letting them know their application has been received. There are decisions to be made when developing the text of this letter. Should it list materials received and those still missing from the application? Many institutions still do this by hand, checking each application as it comes in and marking the missing pieces on a preprinted postcard. A good admission database can select and indicate what is missing. The institution should decide whether it is worth the extra effort (and possible mistakes and phone calls it will engender) to include information about which documents have been logged into the student system. The alternative is that these letters merely list all the needed materials as a reminder to the applicant of what is expected.

Regardless of the outcome of this decision, the acknowledgement document should confirm the department and degree for which the student is applying as well as the desired term of entry so he/she can alert the office of any discrepancies. This information can, and probably should, print directly from your database. You will want the phone calls this letter may create, as it will help you correct any errors on the part of the applicant or those made in data entry.

Of course the most important communication an applicant will receive is the decision letter. Regardless of the decision, it is very important that all communication with your applicants is carefully proofread.

Denial letters are fairly standard in terms of processing, as there is no need for any specific information beyond student name and address. The text can simply state that the institution received a large number of high-quality applicants and the student has not been admitted. If your institution chooses, you can include more specific information, such as program and degree, but this is generally considered unnecessary.

Acceptance letters are a bit more involved. These should confirm all the basic information about degree, field of study, and term of entrance. The text should be warm and welcoming, full of congratulations to the student on his/her achievements. It should also include relevant information, such as whether a deposit is required and when classes begin for the entrance term. There are several types of admission letters that can be sent. The type depends on the completion of financial requirements and proof of proficiency in the English language, in addition to being academically admissible.

- Completed Requirements: send letter of admission and I-20 (notification of scholarship or graduate assistantship, if awarded)
- English Language Training Required: send letter of conditional admission with language program I-20, if institution has a language training program (promise of admission once English language requirement has been met)
- Financial Resources Require: send letter of admissibility that states the financial resources required before the I-20 can be sent (I-20 is sent separately after the financial resources are proven and acceptable)

Other forms that can accompany an acceptance letter include:

- quick reference/cheat sheet in the I-20/visa/port of entry process
- intent to enroll form (when returned by students, will help plan for orientation, and provide closer estimates of enrollment numbers)
- arrival information request form (helps with airport pickup and initial settlement)
- detailed orientation schedule
- clarification about requirements upon arrival, i.e. testing, health insurance, health and shots records
- housing information and contract

A third type of decision letter is a withdrawal letter. These are sent to applicants whose applications are being withdrawn. Your withdrawal letter should cite the reason, such as the application was never completed, or the applicant is not qualified for admission based on level of completed education, or the applicant requested his/her application be withdrawn.

See Chapter 4—Technology in the International Office for more information on communication with applicants.

New Student Orientation

International students coming to the U.S. to study are at once excited by the opportunities that lie ahead of them, and nervous about the strange new world that they are about to encounter. A good orientation program will help new students make an easier transition into their new academic community. Acclimation and an understanding of services provided will result in well-adjusted and successful students.

The following logistics should be considered when creating a new student orientation program:

- determine the length of the orientation program (the length will be determined by the program agenda, two to five days is common)
- schedule orientation just prior to the beginning of classes (most students will schedule their arrival in the U.S. to coincide with the beginning of orientation; and usually enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before classes begin)
- orientation should be coordinated with academic advising and class
- orientation must be coordinated with housing (available just prior to orientation, to avoid temporary situations and then resettlement)

The following list is not all inclusive, but provides some topics that should be covered during orientation:

- academic structure and process
- styles of instruction
- class-work and attendance expectations
- semester/quarter credit explanations
- grading structure

- degree requirements: major, minor, general education
- academic advising process
- registration process
- student services
- learning and writing centers
- tutoring
- health care
- housing and food services
- on-campus employment
- student involvement and campus organizations
- additional discussions and activities
- cultural norms
- social life
- spiritual life
- personal finances
- campus tour
- community tour: banks, shopping, services, entertainment, worship

Again, a good orientation program will help students adjust to a new environment: academic, cultural, and community. Through these efforts we can better ensure success, and ultimately, program completion and graduation.

CHAPTER 4

Technology in the International Office

"It's not so much that we fear change or are so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between that we fear...it's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when his blanket is in the dryer...there's nothing to hold onto."

Marilyn Ferguson

Introduction: Cuneiform to Palm

Thousands of years ago the world's first institution of higher learning in Mesopotamia began to utilize the new technology of cuneiform, using lines drawn on a clay tablet to communicate and store knowledge. As we enter the new millennium, university administrators are drawing lines on handheld, palm-sized computers, communicating by infrared beams and storing knowledge on mini-disks. Is this a giant leap forward or merely inevitable improvement on the original idea? Whatever your opinion, there is no doubt that technology is rapidly changing our world.

Sessions about "emerging technologies" began appearing at most international education professional conferences in the mid-1990s. To be accurate, these technologies were not really "emerging," they had emerged. The math and science cohorts, not to mention institutional administrative offices using mainframe computers, had been well aware of them for years. However, they were now starting to impact institutions on a broader scale. At the time, technology sessions were often greeted by professionals with a mixture of excitement and horror. ("Sessions on technology? I already have enough to do!") Discussions of the growing importance of e-mail were sometimes derided ("Why would this be a necessary job skill? ") or, even worse, ignored ("I'm going to retire in ten years. Why should I bother learning this?").

Today, less than a decade after those first conference sessions, it would be hard to imagine any office in higher education or international education without internet-ready computers programmed with e-mail addresses—and offices are now filled with staff members who clearly know how to use these tools. Technological change has had an impact on the attitudes of higher education professionals. Even confirmed anti-geeks have learned to use e-mail to good effect on a daily basis. Many of us now embrace new technology, champing at the bit until the day our institutions actually accept on-line applications.

In addition, we can see a marked change in the discussion of the use of technology within the field. Book chapters that once gently and appropriately encouraged colleagues to "computerize" their operations and listed definitions of printer types and specific "how-to's" now seem outdated. Computers and the internet have melded into the term "technology" and, in the process, have become ubiquitous tools of the trade.

So the growth in the use of technology has been exponential. Many international educators are valiantly trying to keep up with myriad developments and technology upgrades that often leave them confused, frustrated, and exhausted before they get to the "human" tasks that many feel are ultimately the more essential parts of the job. "Stop!" they say. "I need time to catch up!" But technology marches onward with, perhaps unfortunately and unwisely, rarely casting a backward glance. As in life, the only constant in technology is change.

Advances in software interfaces between the web and databases means vast improvements in record keeping and data access. Data entry and retrieval is more accurate, less prone to error. It is possible, with the correct configurations and security, to access even the most confidential records on the system from the computer at your desk or at a cybercafe in Borneo.

Today, most of the world's desktop and laptop computers run one particular operating system. However, other operating systems are becoming far more competitive. Not only do these systems offer more stability (less down time), security (e.g., minimal problems with e-mail viruses and worms), and the potential for reduced support personnel costs; at least one of them is free. That's correct, **free**. As user interfaces and software for these systems improve and proliferate, it is highly likely that we will see institutions, ever mindful of their budgets, moving toward these more cost-effective solutions.

This chapter attempts to illustrate some of the new technologies that have had the greatest impact on the international admission process and will review some of the considerations that impact institutional decisions about upgrading or changing internal admission procedures.

I. Technology in Recruitment

World Wide Reach: The Importance of the World Wide Web

When researching colleges and graduate schools, prospective students used to turn to anthology style publications, such as Peterson's Guides, to read short but informative paragraphs about the institutions of their choice. From these publications they could discover an institution's size, highly rated programs, percentage of students continuing on to graduate schools, and other telling information. The dawn of the internet age has changed all that. The web is swiftly replacing libraries and books as the first source of information students and prospective students turn to for information on higher education institutions. Now a prospective student can view course offerings, even take a virtual campus tour from the comfort of his or her desk chair. And they are! Many students now open their conversations at college fairs with "When I was visiting your college's web site…."

Thus, your institution's web site is now perhaps its most important recruiting tool and it is vital that you treat it as such. Not only should your site be attractive and easy to navigate—you should take pains to make sure that it gives a true sense of your institution. Many admission office web sites, however, neglect to consider the special technical peculiarities faced by some prospective international students and their families. To help illustrate this point, consider the following.

In late 1999, some workshops were given in a developing country for the Educational Advisors in the larger geographic region. The participants were using standard-issue computers (much like what one would have seen on a U.S. college campus) and the venue was the building that served as the point-of-entry for the internet to this particular country, so the connections were above average. Over the course of the workshop, the average download time for a page from a U.S. college or university was around two minutes.

Now, let's put that in the context of the international student. At the time, the students from that country were paying the equivalent of around U.S. $50 for a half-hour of time at a cybercafe. In one half-hour, the student was able to download about 15 pages (based on the two-minute download time). Of those 15 pages, how many would actually have relevant and helpful information for the international student? Very few, if any at all.

In the United States, we have grown accustomed to the idea of "free" high-speed access at institutions and a tidy internet access package of around $20-25 per month for 56k modem dial-in access (2001 average) or from $39-125 per month cable or DSL (sometimes including satellite or cable TV access). We tend to forget—or we may not bother to learn—the state of internet access in the countries from which our students come. Ask your students how they get their internet access (if they have it) and what they pay for it. The answers may be eye-openers.

Among the first questions that should be asked when creating a web site that will reach a large international student population:

- Who is our audience? Are they internationally or domestically based international students? Are they of adequate or inadequate English language fluency?
- How do our users connect to the internet? T-1 lines? 14-56k modems? Cybercafes?

- What costs are our users paying for that access in time, money, and other resources (such as equipment)? Do they pay for their phone calls "by the click"? By the minute? By the half-hour?
- What sort of hardware and software are our users using? Are the CPU (processing) speeds on their machines and browser versions capable of handling the site you have built? Are they using the latest browser software or something much older because their machines can't handle the newer versions?

Institutions need to be aware of technology differences that may make a web site difficult or time-consuming for international students to visit. The goal, of course, is that the web site be as easily accessible as possible for prospective international students. Many international students are using computers and systems that would be considered almost obsolete by U.S. standards. If they have to struggle to see an institution's site, think of the impression that it leaves with the potential customers. In all likelihood, they will not stay long—and, more importantly, they won't come back.

One option to consider is creating an "international student gateway" that links directly from the institution's main home page to a special, low graphic section especially designed to draw together information needed by international students. Admittedly, it is a challenge to advocate for this when there are so many competitive departments and perceived needs fighting for that precious place on the main page. It might be helpful to remember, though, that your international students are often paying the most money of any attending student to be at your institution. It would be a welcoming gesture indeed to let international students know, from the very first page, that they are especially appreciated.

Among the information that should be available "up front" to international students:

- institutional admission standards
- application (should be downloadable in a variety of formats and available in hard copy by e-mail request)
- tuition and cost information, including information about any and all available scholarships. If there are none, then just say so.
- financial aid application, if different, or international student financial aid application or financial certification requirements
- course catalogue, department, and program pages

Each institution and/or international student office should clearly think through the way that the information should be presented from the *viewpoint of the student user*, not of the campus or international office. The students will be able to learn the intricacies of the institutional bureaucracy once they arrive on campus. Is it really necessary for them to be frustrated by it before they even apply?

A few institutions, realizing the enormous role of parents in an international student's decisions on education and career (particularly for undergraduates) have begun to design specific portions of the international student gateway for the parental constituency. This has allowed them to proactively address issues that concern parents and, indeed, to effectively target the individuals most often responsible for making the final decision of which institution the student will attend—not to mention the ones who pay the bills.

Making allowances for staff time and budgetary issues vis-à-vis a web site is another important consideration. And what can be done for those who want a very attractive graphical site as well as a text site to meet the needs of their constituency? One option is to have two sites; one graphical and one text-based. But who has the time to update and maintain both? The solution to that challenge will be coming within a few years when we will see low-cost products that use databases to maintain web sites and build in the text option, both for the user's choice and by default for older browsers.

Attractive, informative, and helpful web sites can be built in simple and effective ways that will minimize download times for the users and yet provide the necessary amount of information. An office or institution fortunate enough to have a webmaster highly skilled in and knowledgeable about accessibility issues and the needs of international students as well as good local technical support, clearly has an advantage in

marketing and recruitment. For those offices or institutions that may need or desire assistance in the area of accessibility issues, it may be a good idea to take advantage of technology sessions at professional conferences to learn about these issues. In addition, consultants with the appropriate background in technology and international education can provide services such as web site analysis, log analysis, or other technology solutions that may be an appropriate investment for an institution or office that places a priority on serving the needs of its international students and their families.

In addition to becoming the initial reference tool, the web may soon become our primary method of communicating with potential students. The future will almost certainly hold virtual college fairs for international students, or even for domestic students. These events would allow students to visit your site at a particular time, see a virtual presentation (either in a text form, or even in a real-time "movie" version) and then type questions to you from their own computers. Consider how your institution would participate in such an event—what hardware/software would be necessary? How would its purchase be financed? Who would be trained to use it and at what cost? This is a case where our consumers—prospective applicants—may drive our technological choices in that they may simply not consider institutions that do not offer this type of admission service.

II. Technology and Credential Evaluation

Web-based Resources

In addition to reshaping the recruitment process, the internet has also had a great impact on credential evaluation for international students. It has made a wide variety of sources easily accessible to evaluators without the expense of purchasing additional books and other resources. The web may at some point eliminate the need to purchase new editions of tried and true sources, as the information available on the web is typically updated. But the necessity of having a basic library of international education sources, if only for training purposes, will always exist.

Below is a list and description of commonly used and very helpful general sources available on the internet for credential evaluation and explanation of international educational systems. (See also Appendices A and B for additional information on resources.)

NAFSA
www.nafsa.org
Association of International Educators. Offers information useful to administrators, teachers, admission professionals, and international student advisors.

UNESCO
www.unesco.org/iau/wad_data.html
Provides information, by country and often by region, about international educational systems. Useful for admission and also for transfer credit guidelines.

USC International Exchange Resource Index
www.usc.edu/dept/overseas/links.html
Provides resources and links to information about all areas of international student services, such as financial aid, immigration information, and currency conversion.

USNEI
www.ed.gov/NLE/USNEI/HP1ABOUT.html
National information and referral service that assists American educators, students, and parents with information about international education to facilitate educational mobility.

CIEE
www.ciee.org
Council on International Educational Exchange. Provides information about employment and internships throughout the world for students, parents, and teachers.

YAHOO Higher Education Search Engine
http://dir.yahoo.com/education/higher_education
Provides links to a wide variety of information about higher education in the U.S. and abroad.

European Commission SOCRATES/NARIC
http://europe.eu.int/en/comm/dg22/socrates/agenar.html
An initiative of the European Union aimed at improving academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study across the Union.

Altapedia
www.altapedia.com
Contains full-color physical and political maps as well as key facts and statistics on counties of the world.

Electronic Mail

Electronic mail has transformed the world of communication. The exchange of information has moved into a new rapid-fire realm with the advent of e-mail and instant messaging technology. In the international admission office, e-mail has become a vital tool not only for communicating with applicants around the world, but in the evaluation of international academic credentials as well.

- E-mail allows institutions to quickly contact each other to verify degrees, transcripts, etc.
- It allows very quick communication with other evaluators for advice and counsel
- It allows students and potential students to request admission materials, ask questions about programs, and gather information about various institutions
- Specialized e-mail listservs and distribution lists provide a forum for international evaluators and others with questions about international students. Many topics can be addressed, including transfer credit, admission standards, accreditation questions, and immigration status. (See Appendices for information on the INTER-L listserv.)

A final consideration with regard to technology in the field of credential evaluation is somewhat sinister: fraud. While technological advances bring some relief to harried credential evaluators and admission officers, the very same technology is providing new avenues of fraud and forgery to unethical individuals. Official looking transcripts and certificates can be easily designed and printed on the average high-grade home computer. Institutions now find themselves trying to stay one step ahead of the game by investing in new technologies for producing documentation that discourage and/or reveal tampering. These technologies vary from new paper stocks that are difficult to copy to holographic seals and identifiers. What remains certain is that the cat and mouse game of fraud will continue to try to outdo and outsmart the profession—and that the technology being developed can help to keep the game in "check." (See Chapter 7—Fraudulent Credentials.)

III: Technology in the Admission Process

New technologies are not only affecting the way institutions work with prospective students, but they also have the potential to reshape the entire admission process, provided an institution has the time and the money to utilize these technologies in efficient ways.

Applying On-line

Many universities now accept on-line applications, with no paperwork submitted at all. The "Common Application" on paper has now become an even more "common" application on-line, as prospective students are now able to use web sites where their personal information is stored, retrieved, and formatted to fit the parameters and requirements of multiple college application forms.

But the deceptively simple phrase "on-line application" can mean a variety of things in today's technology.

Of primary importance when planning any on-line application process is the recognition that international students access institutional web sites in a myriad of ways (different connection speeds, access systems, browsers, etc.) Their access determines how they experience an institution's site and on-line application procedures. Application formats should take into consideration all the ways in which prospective students access an institution's site—and the tools they have to do so. While most American students have the connections and equipment to handle on-line forms and transactions, it is wise to let the international students choose the application format that is best suited for their needs by providing them with a variety of options. Institutions may choose to use an on-line application form that interfaces with a database on a local or network server. This will only serve a limited portion of international students. It is wise to provide a PDF (Adobe Acrobat) version of the application and, at the very least, a standard office (not personal) e-mail address (e.g., *application@euphoriastate.edu*) where applicants can write to get a paper version of the application.

That said, it is helpful to review some of the current technologies available.

Imaging technologies, including document scanning, have been making inroads into admission applications procedures at some institutions. However, depending on the size and application volume of the international office, these technologies may require fairly large-scale financial investments and training time for staff. Integrating these types of technologies into an institution's existing student information system may require an institution-wide system retrofit in order to be somewhat efficient and effective. Frankly, much of the effectiveness of these technologies is being rapidly outpaced by digital on-line transactions.

Another technology is to have a downloadable form available that can be used in conjunction with an applicant's word processing software. The applicant then submits the form either through e-mail or prints it out and mails it by regular post. However, using such a format opens up both security and data entry concerns. If word processing files are being e-mailed into the office, how do you upload the information to a database without having to re-enter all the data manually? And if the applications are accepted electronically through e-mail, how can the receiving office be protected from the inevitable—and potentially devastating—computer viruses that might accompany such a submission. In other words, how do you protect system integrity? If your institution decides to adopt this type of submission format (and we strongly caution against this), the office and institutional computer and e-mail systems will, out of necessity, need cutting edge virus protection software and a good firewall.

The most rapidly growing format of on-line applications comes though web-based forms. Undergraduate institutions can either build their own system (which may be prohibitively expensive) or choose to participate in a common on-line application process through a variety of vendors. These vendors allow prospective students the opportunity to complete their objective information at their leisure. They need only enter the standard data (name, rank, and serial number) one time. At the same time, this format give the applicants the opportunity of completing all the data entry over a series of on-line sessions (provided, of course, that they are not filling out these web-based forms the night before the application is due!). Many vendors also provide the opportunity to submit essays and personal statements for each institution. The applicant then chooses which institutions should receive his/her application. On one hand, this kind of one-stop shopping makes the application process significantly easier for prospective students and allows them to focus on the more "personal" portions of the application procedure, rather than on repetitively entering the standard data. On the other hand, this method leaves institutions with a number of issues to consider.

One very important consideration is information privacy. This an area where institutions may need to do some research, as vendors (which are, at the end of the day, businesses) can vary widely in what they consider appropriate privacy policies when compared to the privacy policies and guidelines to which educational institutions must adhere. While there are a few vendors that have excellent privacy policies in place, others do not—and all privacy policies are not alike. Caveat emptor! (Buyer beware!) Both institutions and applicants will benefit from a careful look at these issues and a choice of vendors that truly respects the privacy of the applicants.

Another consideration is how to link the applicant-submitted information with an institution's admission database.

Some institutions choose to have staff members input data from printed versions of the application (both those submitted on-line and those mailed in). While the process is easier for the applicant, it certainly is not easier for the admission office at the other end, which then has to process the information in this format. This method is neither timesaving nor cost-effective, as data entry clerks are still needed to process and to enter the information into the databases. Worse, it adds another layer of possibility for human error in the data, leading to more expenditures of time and money somewhere down the line in order to correct the inevitable data entry errors.

Some institutions have established a system that allows admission applications submitted electronically to be uploaded, indirectly or directly, into the student information database. This method makes the application process extremely simple for a prospective student and more accurate for the admission office.

By having the applicant enter his/her own data, the possibility for data error is lessened because there is not another layer of data entry. As an example, the overworked, underpaid data entry clerks aren't forced to attempt to decipher yet another applicant's handwriting. (When an individual types out a form, she/he usually knows the correct way to spell his/her own name!)

This method also avoids the problem of computer viruses. However, for the continued safety and security of the receiving database as well as to preserve the integrity of the data, one of the best types of information transfer is to indirectly submit the incoming data to a "holding tank" file before allowing it to enter the main database. In other words, once the applicant submits the data, it is added to a file with other new incoming data. This file can be exported, downloaded, uploaded, reviewed, updated, and corrected (whatever it takes) before it is added to the primary data file, increasing the accuracy of the data. Direct transfer of information from the on-line form to the database could easily allow bogus information to enter and even corrupt the data set. Here again, as in life, an ounce of prevention is more than worth a pound of cure.

Lastly, an important consideration for international applicants may be the payment options for on-line application fees. While credit cards are ubiquitous in North America, they are not necessarily so abroad—especially outside of the tourist industry. International students may not have access to credit cards or their credit cards may not be acceptable outside the border of their native lands. Some "common application" sites now accept checks, but this is of no use if the applicant has no U.S.-based checking account. Some institutions have briefly decided to do away with on-line application fees for international applications—and promptly found themselves inundated with "ghost" applications that never came to fruition, but which demanded extraordinary personnel time to process before the situation was discovered. One of the best solutions seems to be that of allowing international students to complete applications on-line and to send the application fee, when necessitated by the applicant's situation, through the regular post. When this occurs, a good policy (and one that the application form/format should clearly indicate) is to make it clear that *no action* will be taken on further processing the application information until payment of the application fee is received and processed.

As in everything else electronically oriented, the decision to offer an on-line application is neither simple nor easy. It also involves a significant amount of work on the "front end" of the process in order to make everything work smoothly in the back end. Institutions that take the time to carefully consider the needs of their applicants and their own institution, as well as the technological possibilities that can help them meet those needs, will be better prepared to meet the challenges of admission offices as we enter this new century.

Communicating with Your Applicants

Once the application is in the system, your institution should make every effort to communicate with the applicant. Communication has the potential to decrease the high volume of phone calls and e-mails to your office. Many student systems allow these communications to be prepared as template form letters, in which most of the text is the same for all applicants. With the help of a computer-savvy individual in your office or your central computing center, some programming can be done so that applicant-specific information can be incorporated into each piece of communication.

Generally, the sequence of communication during the admission process can take the following path:

- Application acknowledgement letter
- Application status letter/missing credentials letter (if separate from acknowledgement letter)
- Admission decision letter (accept, deny, withdraw)
- Financial aid information letter (if separate from acceptance letter)
- Immigration forms (if separate from acceptance letter)
- Orientation information

For most of the above pieces of communication, applicant-specific information taken directly from your student information database provides the most thorough information for your applicants. In addition, if you work in a high-volume office or have multiple responsibilities, coding your standard pieces of communication to merge with applicant information from your database can save an enormous amount of time. But beware! The more you communicate with your applicants, the more accurate your information must be. See the section below on accurate data entry.

For many applicants, especially international students, the admission decision is critically important to their envisioned future. Even with a good applicant communication system in place, applicants will still call or e-mail your office with anxious queries about the status of their application. Your database, therefore, should allow office staff to easily identify the location of an applicant's file, the current stage of the admission process for the file, and dates that credentials were received and stages of the process completed.

A recurring theme underlying this discussion on communication with applicants is accurate data entry. Imagine yourself as an applicant to an institution and you receive a piece of communication from that institution with your name misspelled, or the program for which you applied is listed incorrectly, or even your gender is not correct. What impression would that leave you with? Poor data entry and sloppy proofreading of written communication, including e-mail, will not only negatively impact your applicant pool and institution's reputation, but will also generate an increased volume of angry phone calls and e-mails for your office. Make sure that your process includes at least one thorough proofreading step to catch errors before letters are sent. In addition, establishing a method to review data entry before communication pieces are generated may ultimately save you and your staff time and your institution some embarrassment.

Conclusion

Just before the turn of the millennium, a prominent biographical television show named the once obscure German printer, Johannes Gutenberg, as the single most influential person of the last thousand years. Perhaps in our modern world, we can take some comfort from the cyclical nature of history and use the past to see us through the present and prepare us for the future. A simple idea, movable type, led to a revolutionary technology in the Germany of the 1500s. This technology was not a panacea; it was simply a tool. It did not "simplify" the life of the local town printer. Indeed, it made it more complex. It demanded a high learning curve from its users in order to maximize the eventual benefits. It made the business more competitive, but it added to the annual budget and the costs for maintenance, etc. were not that cheap. However, the technology not only allowed people to work and communicate more effectively, it literally changed the world—a fact that may never have entered the mind of its creator.

It is intriguing to speculate if Herr Gutenberg might be amazed to watch this author at work on a laptop computer as she or he manipulates type, checks grammar and spelling, and transmits the completed document digitally to the editors of this book within seconds. The next version of this chapter may well be written on some mountaintop, dictated to a voice-activated word processing system and beamed to the editors via a mobile phone, which displays the e-mail confirmation that the "manuscript" has been received.

Whatever tools we have, our primary responsibility is to keep the human element foremost so that we are using those tools to meet the needs of our students and the challenges of our profession. Regardless of what type of web site an institution develops or the technologies that it chooses to use, the goal should be accessible to the majority of users for whom those technologies are intended. Otherwise, what's the point?

CHAPTER 5

International Academic Credential Evaluation: Basic Methodology

Determining the U.S. equivalency of an international academic credential is one part of the entire international admission decision-making process. Evaluation of any single academic credential involves these basic steps, not necessarily in this order:

1. Comparison of the applicant's biographical information and educational history statement with credential.
2. Verification of the accuracy of the English translation of a non-English credential.
3. Determination of the authenticity of the credential.
4. Verification of the official status of the institution awarding the credential.
5. Determination of the level of the program represented by the credential.
6. Determination of the equivalency of the credential.
7. Calculation of credits or units, if applicable.
8. Calculation of grades or grade point average.
9. Determination of the suitability of the applicant to the admitting institution.

- Step 1 is completed to ensure that the credential being evaluated actually belongs to the applicant.
- Step 2 is completed whenever the foreign credential is not issued in English. Key words and numbers, such as dates, all grades, and names, should be checked to determine if the translation is complete. The foreign credential, not the translation, should be the primary resource in the credential evaluation.
- Steps 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8 are completed by using international admission resources, such as WES (World Education Series) or PIER (Projects for International Education Research) volumes or by obtaining information from other sources typically used by international admission professionals, such as institutional web sites, ministry of education publications, ECE Presents publications, or the Graduate Handbook. (See Appendix B—Publications and Other Useful Resources.)
- Step 6 is at the heart of the credential evaluation decision-making process. The equivalency determination requires the application of a set of principles and methods to a body of knowledge of the foreign educational system of the applicant, the U.S. educational system, and the institutional policies of the admitting institution. The equivalency determination is the credential evaluator's opportunity to exercise judgement based on the body of knowledge and the principles and methods of the international admission professional.

The issue of judgement is key to this process. Although the method described below provides a clear and logical method for evaluating credentials, the international admission professional will most likely encounter many situations in which the equivalency decision can be debated.

International admission professionals should consider a number of philosophical questions when applying credential evaluation methodology. Some of these are:

- Which characteristics of a benchmark credential are essential for me to make an equivalency determination?

- Must a foreign program be the same length in years as the U.S. benchmark credential for me to make an equivalency determination?
- Should I apply the same admission criteria to foreign applicants as I do for U.S. applicants?
- Do institutional policies or goals override other admission considerations?

Credential Benchmark Decisions and a Process for Determining Degree Equivalency

The credential evaluation process can be thought of as similar to solving a mathematical equation. The U.S. credential is on one side of the equation and the foreign credential is on the other side of the equation. In the middle, a ~ indicating "approximately" is probably more apt than an equal sign, since most equivalencies are based on credentials being comparable rather than identical. This is a clear and logical method to make an evaluation decision. The following terms will help in the process:

- **comparability** – Determination of degree of likeness between two foreign educational credentials.
- **benchmark credential** – An academic award which marks the point of transition from one level of education to the next higher level. These include:
- **high school diploma** – The U.S. credential which marks the point of transition from secondary to postsecondary education.
- **bachelor's degree** – The U.S. credential which marks the point of transition from undergraduate postsecondary education to graduate postsecondary education.
- **master's degree** – The U.S. credential which marks the point of transition from the first graduate postsecondary level to the highest postsecondary level.

Three steps in making evaluation decisions are:

1. List key characteristics to form a profile of the benchmark credential at your institution for a specific program of study. Table A indicates the general categories of characteristics to identify. Table B indicates specific characteristics which might apply to a credential. Tables C, D, and E indicate how this might be applied to specific benchmark credentials. Your institution might include additional characteristics not found in Tables A-E, but which are considered important for your institution.
2. Determine characteristics of the foreign credential being evaluated. Does the foreign credential share each key characteristic of the U.S. benchmark credential?
3. Determine if there is an acceptable level of comparability between the foreign credential and the U.S. institution's requirements for a benchmark credential. Can a statement of comparability be made?

An admission professional can use this worksheet to organize information and apply the process:

U.S. BENCHMARK CREDENTIAL	FOREIGN CREDENTIAL	
Step 1	Step 2	
Characteristic	**Yes**	**No**

Step 3: **Statement of comparability** _____

Table A

1. Nature (authority) of institution awarding degree
2. Requirements for entrance (admission)
   a. Academic
   b. Examinations
   c. Student characteristics (age, experience, etc.)
3. Program characteristics
   a. General education
   b. Specialized or professional education
   c. Length
   d. Examinations
   e. Practical experiences
   f. Projects or other major activities
   g. Faculty supervision
   h. Residency
   i. Other curriculum feature
4. Gives access to in country

Table B

1. Nature (authority) of institution awarding degree
   Diploma awarded by recognized academic institution
   Credential awarded by a postsecondary institution
   Institution or program recognized by appropriate body
2. Requirements for entrance (admission)
   a. Academic
      Admission based on graduation from upper secondary school or equivalent
      Admission based on graduation from a bachelor's program from a regionally-accredited institution
   b. Examinations
      Standardized test required for admission
   c. Student characteristics (age, experience, etc.)
      Minimum age required for admission
      Portfolio required for admission
3. Program characteristics
   a. General education
      Completion of xx units in xxx
      Completion of course work in general education
      Completion of course work in electives
   b. Specialized or professional education
      Completion of course work in xxx
      Completion of significant course work in xxx
      Completion of introductory, core, and elective courses in major
      Completion of upper division courses in major
      Completion of substantial number of courses in major and related fields
      Completion of seminar work, introduction to research, or senior thesis
      Significant course work in xxx
   c. Length
      Completion of xx annual units
      At least xx semester hours (xx quarter hours)
      Designed to be completed in xx years of full-time study
      Significant period of study beyond bachelor's level at an advanced level
      Minimum period of full-time study required

Table B *(continued)*

d. Examinations
   Completion of comprehensive examinations
   Completion of competency tests in basic skills
e. Practical experiences
   Completion of field work or practicum
   Completion of a supervised clinical internship
f. Projects or other major activities
   Capstone or culminating experience (thesis, research program, performance, comprehensive examination)
   Preparation and oral defense of dissertation
g. Faculty supervision
   Faculty advisor who approves program of study
   Significant involvement with a faculty advisor and faculty committee
h. Residency
   Residency at the degree-awarding institution
i. Other curriculum feature
   Mastery of foreign language or research tool
   Demonstration of independent research

4. Gives access to in country
   Leads to admission to postsecondary education
   May meet professional licensing requirements
   Leads to certification as a teacher
   Leads to the ability to take professional/state licensure examinations

Table C

Credential Profile of One Example of a U.S. High School Diploma

- completion of an entire secondary school program
- completion of at least 16 units
- completion of four units of English
- completion of one unit of algebra
- completion of one unit of geometry
- completion of one unit of trigonometry
- completion of one unit of calculus
- completion of four units of social studies
- completion of two units of foreign language
- completion of three units of laboratory science (earth science, biology, chemistry, physics)
- completion of honors, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate course(s) culminating in a major project or external examination

One or more of these characteristics may be included in a program leading to a high school diploma. Because there is a great deal of variation in U.S. high school diploma programs, not all characteristics will be present in all programs.

Table D

Credential Profile of One Example of a U.S. Bachelor's Degree

- admission based on graduation from upper secondary school or equivalent
- at least 120 semester hours (180 quarter hours)
- designed to be completed in four years
- completion of general education requirements
- completion of major requirements
- completion of introductory, core, and elective courses in major
- completion of specialized and advanced courses in major
- completion of upper division courses in major
- completion of substantial number of courses in major and related fields
- completion of seminar work
- introduction to research
- completion of honors or honors thesis

One or more of these characteristics may be included in a program leading to a bachelor's degree. Because there is a great deal of variation in U.S. bachelor degree programs, not all characteristics will be present in all programs.

Table E

Credential Profile of One Example of a U.S. Master's Degree

- admission based on graduation from a bachelor's degree program from a regionally-accredited institution
- at least one year of full-time study
- at least 30 semester hours (45 quarter hours)
- mastery of a core curriculum or prescribed program of study, including courses, seminars, and/or research
- faculty advisor who approves program of study
- completion of field work or practicum
- comprehensive examinations
- mastery of a foreign language or research tool
- capstone or culminating experience (thesis, research program, performance)
- residency at the degree-awarding institution

One or more of these characteristics may be included in a program leading to a master's degree. Because there is a great deal of variation in U.S. master degree programs, not all characteristics will be present in all programs.

CHAPTER 6

Credential Evaluation in an Undergraduate Setting

The evaluation of international credentials requires careful and thoughtful analysis by admission officers and international specialists and often a great deal of investigative work. It requires utilization of resources, tools, and a "gut" feeling as well as a mindset open to varying degrees of information.

First it is important to determine the purpose for the evaluation of a student's documents: admission eligibility to your institution, or a detailed course-by-course evaluation for degree requirements. Some institutions may require a detailed evaluation, depending on the purpose, whereas others may need only a summary for class level or eligibility. This will determine the degree of detail or depth the evaluation requires.

Institutional Policies

Institutional policies for domestic evaluation should be the guide for evaluation of international credentials. There should also be established and up-to-date institutional policies specifically for evaluating foreign credentials. These guidelines should include the level of flexibility given to the international evaluator to make decisions and should include support for those decisions.

Resources for Evaluation Decisions

It is important for international evaluators to have available a library of resources for reference. There are a number of important publications and resources designed to assist in the evaluation of international academic credentials. These include publications by AACRAO and NAFSA as well as from other agencies specializing in various areas related to international students. They include detailed descriptions of educational systems, sample documents, assessments of levels of education, and guidelines for equivalencies. These sources should be used in concert with your own institutional policies to evaluate foreign credentials.

Internet resources including institutional web sites provide useful and helpful information. Many are also connected to e-mail addresses to individuals closely connected to the institution. These resources will also offer important web sites or addresses of embassies and Ministries.

Attendance at local, regional, and national conferences is also a prime resource, both to gain information and to develop networks of colleagues in the field. NAFSA and AACRAO offer sessions providing the most up-to-date information on educational systems and other aspects of international education.

You should create your own library of "Country" file folders containing sample documents and information/materials that you have gathered from workshops and meetings, directly from institutions, from inter-L files, and from your own correspondence with institutions or sources.

It is important that you document your source of information to support your decisions. You will find that placement is often left to interpretation. Being able to provide a reference in support of your evaluation decisions will strengthen your ability to defend your decisions if they are questioned. (See the Appendices at the end of this publication for more information on publications, resources, and organizations.)

Faculty and Exchange Programs

Tap into your faculty and the exchange programs on your campus. Faculty may have visited the country, or departments may have exchange faculty from the institution or country you have questions about. Faculty are also helpful interpreting unfamiliar terminology used in translations you receive.

Professional Development

Request that you be authorized to attend and participate in professional conferences such as AACRAO and NAFSA and workshops offered by other resources. You will gain knowledge from experts in the field as well as updates on country systems to help you formulate your own analysis.

What to Gather to Begin the Process

The application for admission should contain an accurate list of school attendance for the student, which will determine the documents required for evaluation. Assure that the documents are complete, including courses, hours/units, dates of attendance, and results. Verify their authenticity; compare the translation with the original language document. Never accept only a translated document unless this is the usual standard by which the country issues its documents (i.e. Japan, Korea, and Taiwan). Verify who made the translation and why the original language document cannot be provided. Although you may initially be afraid of original language documents, it won't be long before you gain the necessary skills to read and understand them on your own. If you like puzzles and solving word games, interpreting original language documents will be fun. Your resources and your own intellect will guide you.

Into the Mechanics of Things

Check the basics you will need: The student's file has the correct documents; they are from a recognized institution; you can determine transfer level; the student meets your institution's admission criteria; and the subject matter presented is applicable to your degree program.

Are the documents "official," according to your institution's definition? If you use unofficial documents for a preliminary evaluation, set a deadline to require the original, official records for verification. The definition of an official record comes from both your institution and your resources. Political conditions, natural disasters, or war in a country may affect the availability of original/official documents. Domestic policy regarding unofficial documents should guide your decisions regarding the use of unofficial and/or unverified foreign transcripts. It is rare that official transcripts cannot be obtained.

Verifying information: Compare not only the document, but also what you have on the student's application. The birth date should align correctly with the years of attendance or there should be an explanation for a "gap" in the school/dates list. Compare the student's educational record with the country's educational system and educational ladder.

Evaluating transfer work: The institution should be recognized by the Ministry of Education, or another appropriate government body. Use domestic guidelines for your institution to determine if transfer credit is warranted based on the type of programs the foreign institution offers (e.g. academic, religious, business, vocational, technical).

Determining level-comparability: Does the student fall into the pattern of a first-time freshman at your institution? Will credits for British "A" levels, the German Abitur, or the French Baccalaureate be considered at the level of your students with AP or IB credit?

The overall structure of the educational system of that country will provide the information needed to determine the level of the institution. For example, mathematics can be studied at all levels, but as the evaluator you will need to determine the level of a particular mathematics course, based on educational and experiential background. What you are looking for is the level of education and program completed, and not just at the comparability of U.S. counterparts.

Determining eligibility based on grades, marks, or results: Marks and grading scales are often reported on the transcript itself. This information can be used in conjunction with "generic scales" found in resource publications. Grades may be reported in words, numbers, letters, or percentages. Transcripts may also contain cumulative/ministry exam results. Minimum entrance requirements for students to attend tertiary level in the home country is another option to consider when evaluating an application for admission.

What about inconsistencies? After working with documents for a while and recognizing what one should look like, you may come across one that gives you a feeling that something is out of order.

- You may find inconsistencies in the dates (i.e., they don't match or they show that the student was in more than one place at the same time).
- The paper the transcript is printed on does not feel right.
- There are smudges and erasures.
- There is more than one type or font on the document.
- The original language and the translation do not match or information is missing.
- Keep a file of sample documents or resource materials. If there are inconsistencies ask professionals or colleagues who know what documents should look like. There may have been changes in that country and documents may now have a different format.

Question the student about the "inconsistencies" in the documents, always being careful of how you ask. Use your institution's policies in responding to these types of inconsistencies. (See Chapter 7—Fraudulent Credentials.)

"Course-by-course analysis: If the placement recommendations advise a "course-by-course analysis," use your institution's definition of acceptable courses to your institution. Determine if the course is baccalaureate-level, non-baccalaureate, specialized, vocational-technical, and how it applies to acceptable course-work at your institution. Try to determine what type of program the student is in and how it compares to programs at your institution.

In some countries completion of a program is based on titled exams or certificates. Recommendations for awarding credit are based on these certificates. Some of these are: the French Baccalaureate, DEUG, Licence, German Arbitur, British "O" and "A" levels. To determine general education and degree requirements, you may need additional information, such as which exams were completed to earn the diploma/certificate. A course analysis based on syllabi, or your own departmental faculty's review and recommendations may be required. In some instances, your institution's exchange programs may have already set up course articulation.

Students may present records from two or more foreign education systems. For example, a student completing secondary education in Singapore takes "O" level exams after ten years of education. The student might then continue for one year in Australia and complete the Australian secondary pre-university level program. This will require an examination of each system and how they relate to one another to determine if the student is adequately prepared for admission to your institution.

Questions and Challenges

How credit is transferred and how courses are evaluated leads to one of the most commonly asked questions and one that's difficult to answer, "How long will it take me to graduate?" A two-year or three-year degree program from a foreign institution does not necessarily mean that it will require only an additional one or two years in the U.S. for a bachelor's degree. The differences between U.S. degrees and those from abroad often lead to misunderstandings on the part of international students. They are not well acquainted with the general education requirements of most U.S. universities and may not expect to have to complete these courses when they transfer.

As the international specialist, listen to all the facts, review the information, and offer guidance. Be prepared to review policy when your domestic admission requirements change and be ready to adjust your international work as needed. Once you have determined that your evaluation is correct, based on your resources and precedents, and that you have institutional support, stay firm in your interpretation of the international records.

Summary

Evaluating international documents is not an exact science. That's what makes the field so interesting. Going back to the puzzle analogy, what you will be doing is trying to fit the pieces together. Do you have the "right" pieces? Do you have them all?

You will always be tapping into various resources for your analysis and decisions. Your institution should be prepared to have standard policies regarding credential evaluation, and should have established procedures in the interpretation of foreign records. Information needs to be updated on a continual and regular basis.

"Policy and procedures should show maximum consideration for the individual student...and without sacrificing academic integrity," says *AACRAO Credit Recommendation*.

With this specialized work and knowledge, always know you are not alone! You are part of an international professional field whose members will always be willing to share and tap you for information when questions arise.

CHAPTER 7

Fraudulent Credentials: How To Protect Your Institution Against Fraud

The possibility of misrepresenting and misinforming university officials can exist at any step in the admission process. Misrepresentation and misinformation can take the form of knowingly providing incorrect information on an admission application or by providing altered or forged transcripts and letters of recommendation. The purpose of this chapter is to help you develop guidelines to eliminate the possibility of fraud and maintain the integrity of the information you receive at your institution. For additional information regarding educational credentials, see *Student Records Management: A Handbook*, AACRAO, Greenwood Press, 1996. Before we develop a guideline, however, it is important to understand why and how fraud in the admission process occurs.

Why Does Fraud Occur?

The importance of education is universally acknowledged. For many foreign applicants to your institution, the opportunity to pursue higher education is limited by financial resources, high admission standards, a policy of *numerus clausus* or a mandated limitation of the number of students admitted to a particular field of study in their home country. For many, the opportunity to obtain a U.S. education fulfills a lifelong dream and guarantees a level of success or recognition not possible if they attended an institution in their home country. For some, this opportunity leads them to take rather desperate actions. It should be noted, however, that although fraud in the admission process occurs, statistically speaking the number of fraudulent credentials submitted is quite small in comparison to the number of applications received.

Forged, altered, counterfeited, and other types of falsified documentation may be used by persons who seek further education, professional licensure, or employment that requires proof of completion of a level or quality of education that they do not have, or that they do have but cannot document because of financial or political circumstances. For example, some institutions will not issue a grade report if a student owes money for unpaid tuition. Some institutions will not issue a grade report if a student has left the country illegally.

Falsified documents can originate in any country, but they are especially prevalent in countries where there has been economic, military, political, or social turmoil. At present, this includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Cuba, El Salvador, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Iraq, Laos, Lebanon, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Vietnam, and the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia.

Is It Possible to Eliminate Opportunities for Fraud?

Unfortunately, it is impossible to eliminate every opportunity for fraud or misinformation. Stating your institutional policies and procedures up front to prospective students can go a long way to ensure that you receive accurate information and authentic documentation.

The first way to do this is to have a comprehensive application with clear instructions that must be followed by the prospective student. Instruct the applicant that the application is to be completed fully and accurately, and if not, the application will be rejected. The application should be completed by the student only and not by an agent or sponsor—to allow this opens the opportunity for misinformation. Many institutions consider the application for admission a legal document. In these cases knowingly providing false information is against the law.

Applicants for admission should be required to complete an educational history or comprehensive listing of all institutions attended, beginning with primary education through the present. The names of all

diplomas or degrees awarded should be listed in English and the native language with dates of the award. Your application should clearly state that institutions attended and credentials received that are not listed, will not be considered for academic transfer credit at a later date. The educational history should be reviewed in conjunction with the student's academic credentials.

Additionally, foreign applicants should provide you with a brief statement of purpose (written in their own hand) that describes why they want to attend your institution. The statement of purpose can be used to verify their English-language skills against their TOEFL scores and, if necessary, to compare handwriting.

The First Step in Guarding Against Fraud: Accept Only Official Documents

Generally speaking, the only acceptable source for an official educational credential is the educational authority that issued it.

An official educational credential can be defined as one that is issued by an institution with the jurisdictional authority over that particular type of academic document. For example, in the United States an official university transcript is issued by the university registrar, not a faculty member, department chair, dean, or state education official. Likewise, ACT, SAT, and GRE scores are issued by the appropriate examining board, not a high school counselor or university testing center.

The procedure followed by secondary and tertiary academic institutions in the U.S. requires that the credential be sent by the academic authority to the receiving institution via regular mail or, in some cases, electronically through an acceptable, secure medium.

Official academic credentials must bear the appropriate seals, watermarks, signatures, and dates. Academic credentials that do not meet these requirements should be rejected.

What Constitutes an Official Document Outside of the United States?

In other countries, the relevant authority can be very different from the equivalent U.S. authority. The concept of official documentation is country-specific.

In many countries the authority responsible for issuing diplomas or other completion credentials may be a division of the national government (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, etc.).

In the case of external examinations such as the General Certificate of Secondary Education in the United Kingdom, the examining body is the relevant examining authority, not the secondary school the student attended. Additionally, unofficial or provisional examination results presented years after the examinations were taken should not be accepted in lieu of official examination results or certificates.

Although many U.S. institutions have the capability to transmit official transcripts electronically, this should not be expected in other countries. In some countries, computer-generated transcripts are produced; in others, handwritten entries on pre-printed forms are common. Regardless of how official documents are produced, it is possible to develop a procedure for maintaining the integrity of the documentation process.

The first step in determining what constitutes "official" outside the U.S. is to determine who is responsible for issuing academic credentials. There are many printed resources available to the admission office that can help you make this determination. In addition, many of our colleagues share valuable information regarding academic credentials through presentations at professional conferences. Embassy officials can also provide you with this information.

Once you have determined who is responsible for issuing official documents, you need to determine an acceptable mode for receiving the documents.

The ideal mode for receiving official documents is to have them sent directly by the issuing institution to your office. For example, at present, institutions in China will send official transcripts directly to your institution for all students who intend to study in this country legally. It is not necessary or in fact advisable to accept credentials directly from students when this capability exists. When it is not possible to receive official documents from the issuing institution, one must work with original documents.

What Is an Original Document?

An original education credential is one that is issued by an educational authority, either at the time that the credential was awarded or after the award at the request of the student. An original credential will have one or more official signatures and institutional seals. It is important to note that an educational credential can be original without being official. For example, a grade report issued to a student without signatures or a seal is an original, but it is not official. The same is true of original documents issued by unauthorized persons.

By the same token, a document can be official without being original. A photocopy of an original document that has official stamps, seals, and signatures verifying the information contained on the document is an official document even though it is not individually typed or printed. It is ideal to work with documents that are both original and official when making an admission or transfer credit decision.

You should note that in many countries, the notarization of documents is more formalized than it is in the U.S. However, foreign notaries, like their U.S. counterparts, can only attest that they have seen the original of the document they are notarizing—in most cases, they cannot attest to the authenticity of the document.

Most institutions require that students submit original financial documentation. Academic credentials, like bank statements and other financial information, should be issued on bank or corporate letterhead with appropriate signatures and seals. It is preferable that this information be sent directly from the issuing institution to your office. The standard practice is to require a statement of sponsorship or financial viability indicating that the student, or sponsoring business or institution, has sufficient funds on account for at least six months prior to application in order to support the student. In addition, the student should provide you with original bank statements for the last six months. (See Chapter 12—Certification of Finances for Obtaining the Student Visa.)

When Is It Acceptable To Receive Academic Credentials Directly from a Student?

In some countries such as Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, many tertiary institutions do not maintain a permanent record of a student's academic performance. The only information retained by the institution is the name of the degree, the month and year in which it was awarded at a formal convocation, and the overall grade average. In these countries, the only official grade report is the one given to the student at the end of each examination. Whenever the information contained in these grade reports is needed by a third party, the student is expected to use photocopies or handwritten or hand-typed duplicates whose authenticity has been confirmed by the equivalent of our notary public. In these cases, it is reasonable to accept an original official mark sheet (grade report) and degree submitted by an applicant.

Note that it is never acceptable to receive academic credentials stamped "confidential" or "not to be released to the student" directly from a student.

In some countries such as Afghanistan, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Laos, Libya, North Korea, and Vietnam, the political circumstances in the past decade prevent or prohibit a university or governmental agency from issuing educational credentials for a person who has left the country without official governmental permission. In these cases, it is reasonable to accept an original official grade report or degree submitted by an applicant.

Note that whenever your institution has accepted an original educational credential from an applicant, it is important that the original document not be altered by your institution in any way: no date stamps, staples, pen or pencil notation, or folds should be added. To do this constitutes altering the document, and compromises the acceptance of the document in the future. In addition, original documents should be reviewed as soon as possible following their receipt, and returned to the applicant in the safest way possible (e.g., via hand delivery or registered mail or courier service).

In many cases, students will not have official original documents, either because they were not permitted to have original documents in their personal possession or because the originals were lost. In such cases, photocopies of original documents can be used if an admission office or registrar is experienced in

working with educational credentials from the country involved and has sufficiently complete reference materials to determine that the document involved has not been falsified. In many cases, such expertise does not exist in the United States.

The Second Step in Guarding Against Fraud: Develop a Document Checklist

Whether you review thousands of foreign documents per year or just a few, it is important that you develop a formal process for reviewing educational credentials. The following guideline is suggested:

1. **Compare the biographical information on the student's application with the credentials**
   - Does the name and date of birth match?
   - Using the applicant's educational history, check that the chronology of the education completed is logical, both in terms of the educational systems and the age of the applicant.

2. **Verify the institutional information**
   - Is the institution officially recognized by the Ministry of Education or other governmental authority?
   - Did it exist at the time the student was enrolled?
   - What is the level of the institution—primary, secondary, tertiary?
   - What types of programs are offered at the institution—are they academic, vocational, or adult education?
   - Is the program of study offered at this institution? Check your resources.

3. **Verify the authenticity of the credential**
   - Does it resemble other documents you have received from the institution?
   - Does the document appear to be altered in any way?
   - Is the format of the credential what you would expect from that country or does it resemble a U.S. credential or a credential from another country?
   - Are there appropriate seals, signatures, or other official markings?

4. **Check key words on the credential**
   - What does the credential say?
   - Look for key words—graduated, awarded, completed, participated, attended, etc.

5. **Check the accuracy of the translation**
   - Compare it with the foreign language document.
   - Check key words using a dictionary—name of institution, degree awarded, faculty, date of award.

The Third Step in Guarding Against Fraud: Knowledge and Experience

There is no substitute for experience. Although it takes a trained eye to identify altered or fraudulent documents, there are many other ways to detect credentials that are not authentic. Aside from checking the recognition status of institutions, it is important to understand the context of the credentials you review. Keeping a file of sample documents by country, field of study, and year will help you to recognize what to expect from a particular country or institution. For example, you will note that most institutions outside of the U.S. do not issue credentials on 8.5 x 11 paper. In many countries, students are required to pay a fee for copies of official credentials—in these cases, the documents will have tax or fee stamps affixed.

Building a library of publications for your office that will provide you with up-to-date information regarding foreign educational systems is another way to guard against fraud. Projects in International Education Research (PIER) and World Education Series volumes can be purchased through AACRAO and NAFSA. These publications will provide information regarding the type and format of academic credentials issued in a

particular country, the type of grades or curricula to expect, and the normal length of study for a particular degree. These publications will help you recognize formats of documents that are no longer used, unofficial "suggested" grading scales, or degree programs that are no longer (or never were) offered. (See Appendix B—Publications and Other Useful Resources.)

The Methods of Producing Fraudulent Documents

Most falsified educational credentials are submitted in the form of photocopies. Because of the sophistication of modern photocopiers, one can do many things with an original document and then photocopy it carefully enough or often enough to eliminate most traces of the alterations. It is much more difficult to alter an original document without leaving signs. For this reason, it important to use photocopies judiciously, perhaps only in a preliminary screening of applicants. Admission officers and registrars who do not work regularly with foreign educational credentials and other documentation are likely to miss the signs that might be found by careful inspection of a photocopy and careful comparison of it with documents submitted by earlier applicants. It is important to remember that every photocopy has an original—if you question the authenticity of the information presented, request the original.

Be aware, however, that original-looking, official-looking documents can be manufactured and so can "official-looking" original stationery, envelopes, signatures, stamps, and seals.

Common Signs of Altered or Fraudulent Documents

In most cases, it is reasonable to expect that foreign educational credentials will be as complete and as accurate as credentials submitted by graduates of educational institutions in the United States. However, the level of quality control that exists at U.S. institutions is not present in every country of the world. When reviewing credentials note that printing errors and documents that have been sloppily prepared should be taken as clues that a document might not be authentic, but it should not be relied on as absolute proof.

Altered Documents

The three most common ways in which an academic record can be altered are change of name, change of grade(s), and addition of subjects. Other items that are frequently altered are name of degree, field of study, and year of graduation. Alterations to official documents usually take the form of "whited-out" areas, erasures, or addition of information. You should review documents closely to search for clues such as absence of a solid or dotted line in areas specific to the student or typefaces (see Example #1) that do not conform to the standard typeface used in other parts of the document. Preprinted information that appears typeset when the information is usually computer-generated or the reverse, may be grounds for suspicion. Areas with missing information or variations in entries either handwritten or typed should be questioned. Likewise, words or lines of text that are slightly off angle in relation to other parts of the document should be questioned.

Keep in mind however, that a lengthy hand-typed transcript may contain errors or "typos." Any corrections on the document should be initialed by the academic official and if the corrected information is inconsistent with other information contained on the document, it should be verified.

Counterfeit Documents

Some fraudulent credentials are fabricated in whole or in part and made to represent official documentation. Letterhead or forms can be created and made to look official or official forms and letterhead can be stolen and used to create an official-looking document. When reviewing documentation, consider whether the document is consistent with other documents from that institution or the system of education. The document should be the same as, or very similar to, other documents issued by the same institution or agency in the past. Keep in mind that the format of credentials is usually different for each level of education. If there are drastic changes in format, style, or content, the document may have been fabricated by someone unfamiliar with legitimate documents (see Example #2).

Be wary of documents that have American-style courses, course numbers, credits, and grades when the educational system of the country has not been influenced by the United States. You would not normally expect to find *American History 1865-present* on a Romanian transcript.

Absurdly high grades that appear throughout the document may also be a clue that the credential has been forged.

Original official educational credentials always contain the signature and title of one or more persons responsible for issuing them. The absence of such official signatures indicates a likely problem with the document.

When reviewing foreign educational credentials for authenticity it is helpful to understand the mode in which the credential was produced. A Russian *diplom* is typeset, printed, and presented in booklet form. The *diplom* has a sequential serial number and pre-printed text that requires the entry of relevant information concerning the institution attended and qualification received, in addition to official seals and signatures. The *diplom* is controlled by the appropriate ministry and distributed in a controlled manner to the academic institution for issuance to graduates. It is unreasonable to expect that a booklet printed in series would have the name of the student or qualification received typed. The form of the document requires the addition of handwritten entries.

The best guard against accepting counterfeit documents is to maintain a sample document file and to develop a familiarity with the types of official documents that are issued around the world. Although this may seem to be a daunting task, a sample credential file can be very quickly developed. Sample documents in resource materials can also be helpful. Document formats change with frequency, so it is important to make sure that samples are kept for a wide variety of dates.

Misleading Translations

Many institutions around the world issue legitimate official credentials in English. Because English may not be an official language of the country, official credentials may contain grammatical, contextual, or spelling errors. However, these errors should not be considered a sign that the document is not authentic. Students who apply to your institution from countries where institutions do not issue official credentials in English should supply you with an accurate translation prepared by a reputable translation service along with their original official credentials.

Translations should be used as a guide only and reviewed carefully line-by-line against the original document to ensure that information has been accurately represented. It is very important to determine whether or not a translation is complete and accurate. One cannot presume that that is the case, no matter who prepared the translation.

Some translators try to be helpful and in the process they interpret a foreign educational credential into U.S. education terminology that they might not completely understand. Beware of translations that indicate a U.S. equivalency for the credential received. Many times translation services owned and operated by émigrés will interpret a document as they translate it, substituting the name of a U.S. degree for the foreign degree name. You may want to consider keeping a list of recommended translation services to offer students who present foreign language credentials. In addition, faculty at your institution with foreign language ability may be able to assist you if you question the accuracy of a translation.

Degree/Diploma Mills

Degree or diploma mills are not bona fide academic institutions. They are rather services that issue credentials that are not based on appropriate academic work. As such, they have no academic value (see Example #3).

In most cases, a diploma mill will charge a fee to issue a diploma or degree that appears authentic. Students may fall prey to temptation and present you with such a document. Although there are many publications that list recognized academic institutions, there is no comprehensive list of degree or diploma mills.

Admission staff must rely on published lists of recognized institutions in order to determine whether to accept a student's academic records.

Aside from checking the recognition status of an institution, it is also possible to consult *Bear's Guide to Earning Non-Traditional College Degrees* (Ten Speed Press, PO Box 7123 Berkeley, CA 94707) or search the internet. *Bear's Guide* lists a number of institutions that can be defined as "mills," however, the number and names of these institutions changes frequently. Searching for the suspect institution on the internet often leads to information on how to purchase your own degree/diploma and confirmation that you are dealing with credentials from a bogus institution. It is also important to note that a conspicuous lack of information on the internet regarding a particular institution is in itself reason for suspicion.

What To Do When You Suspect Fraudulent Credentials

When you have found clues that indicate that a document may have been forged or altered the routine admission process should be suspended. You should clearly document for your records why you suspect the credential may be fraudulent. You should write the issuing institutions and request verification of the documents. Sometimes verification of credentials is a long process and without adequate documentation you may not remember specifically what made you suspicious. It is also appropriate to require the student to make arrangements for another official, original academic record to be sent from their institution to yours. The following suggestions should be considered when writing for verification:

- Ask direct yet simple questions.
- Use basic English when writing to a country where English is not a commonly spoken language.
- Address your letter to a specific individual—at most institutions this is the Academic Registrar or Academic Secretary.
- Unmarked photocopies of the document(s) in question should be sent for verification to the appropriate authority.
- Include a reference number or other identifier known only to your office and file the documents using this system.
- Consider writing the letter in the native language if you have the capability.

It is important to remember that you have an obligation to the student who is applying to your institution. When you suspect that documents may have been altered or forged you should inform the student that the application process has been suspended pending a response from their institution. This should be done in writing and you should clearly state why you are verifying their documents. Never release the contents of your verification letter to the institution in question to anyone outside your office—this will compromise the verification process and the applicant's right to confidentiality. It is important to let the student know that you will contact them when you have received a response and specifically, that no further action is required on their part until you have received a response to your questions.

OXFORD & CAMBRIDGE

SCHOOLS EXAMINATION BOARD

General Certificate Examination Summer 1969

THIS IS TO CERTIFY *that* [redacted] M. H.

index number 13/23

was examined at Blundell's School

in the following Three *subjects at* ADVANCED LEVEL

with the results indicated below in Grades

ENGLISH	A	PASS (ADVANCED LEVEL)
GEOGRAPHY	B	PASS (ADVANCED LEVEL)
HISTORY	B	PASS (ADVANCED LEVEL)

SUBJECTS RECORDED THREE

K. C. Turbin

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF OXFORD

Eric Ashby

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF CAMBRIDGE

Jon Todd

A E E McKenzie

SECRETARIES TO THE BOARD

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE *accepts the Examination as reaching the approved standard.*

W. Ina Hart

UNDER-SECRETARY

Passes at Advanced level are awarded in grades A, B, C, D, E (A being the highest); O indicates an allowed pass at Ordinary level.

Performances in Special papers may be graded 1 Distinction or 2 Merit.

* Although the General Paper is normally taken by candidates offering Advanced level subjects, it is classified as an Ordinary level subject, and passes are graded only A, B, E.

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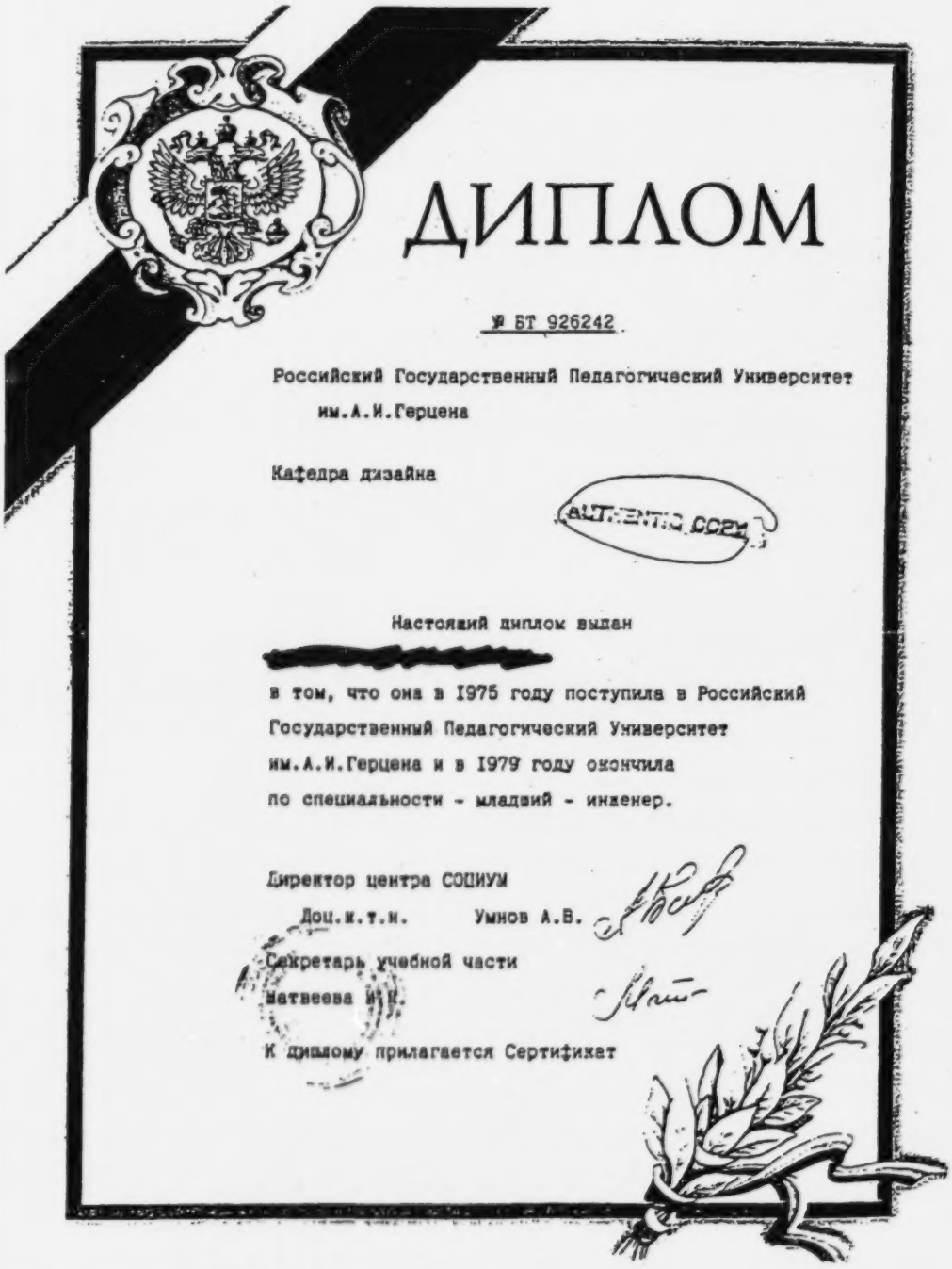

ДИПЛОМ

№ БТ 926242

Российский Государственный Педагогический Университет
им.А.И.Герцена

Кафедра дизайна

АУТЕНТИКО СССР

Настоящий диплом выдан

[redacted]

в том, что она в 1975 году поступила в Российский
Государственный Педагогический Университет
им.А.И.Герцена и в 1979 году окончила
по специальности - младший - инженер.

Директор центра СОЦИУМ
Доц.к.т.н. Умнов А.В.

Секретарь учебной части
Матвеева И.К.

К диплому прилагается Сертификат

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Example #3 — A Degree from a Diploma Mill

THE REGENTS OF

Glencullen University

ON THE NOMINATION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE GRADUATE DIVISION
HAVE CONFERRED UPON

[redacted]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HAVING DEMONSTRATED ABILITY
BY ORIGINAL RESEARCH SUMMA CUM LAUDE -- WITH GREATEST DISTINCTION IN

Art Education

THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

WITH ALL THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES THERETO PERTAINING
GIVEN THIS SIXTEENTH DAY OF MARCH IN THE YEAR
TWO THOUSAND AND ONE

Ronald K. Bowcutt
PRESIDENT OF THE REGENTS

Felici Gaylord
DEAN OF THE GRADUATE DIVISION

Mark Fisher
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

Geoff Grossmacher
CHANCELLOR

Sample Verification Letter #1

Date

School Name
Academic Registrar
Address
Address
Address

RE: Student Name and Date of Birth

Dear:

[Name of Student] has applied for admission to [your institution]. Copies of the documents submitted to us are enclosed for your review. We request that you verify the authenticity of the enclosed documents at your earliest convenience. Please quote reference number [xoxoxox] in your response.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Name
Title

Enclosures

cc: Academic department

Sample Verification Letter #2

Date

School Name
Academic Registrar
Address
Address
Address

RE: Student Name and Date of Birth

Dear:

[Name of Student] has applied for admission to [your institution]. Copies of the documents submitted to us are enclosed for your review. Please respond to the following questions at your earliest convenience. Please quote reference number [xoxoxox] in your response.

1. Are the enclosed documents authentic?
2. We have noted that the following items are not consistent with other documents we have received from your institution:
   - the student's name appears in a different typeface than other typed information on the documents
   - the grades appear to be unusually high in relation to other student records we have encountered from your school.
   - our records indicate that your institution does not offer this degree program, etc. Is this correct?

Your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Name
Title

Enclosures

cc: Academic department

What To Do When a Document Has Been Verified as Inauthentic

Every institution should have a stated policy regarding fraud. Although this policy is usually stated in conjunction with academic fraud or plagiarism, your institutional policy should be clearly stated on your application for admission. Your policy should protect the integrity of your admission process. The confirmation you receive from the issuing institution will be your legal protection regarding your admission decision.

If you receive a response that the documents submitted for verification are fraudulent, it is important that you not indicate verbally or in writing that the student is a forger or has altered their credentials. The student should, however, be notified of the response from their institution. If you have not already done so, you should attempt to get the original altered or fraudulent document out of the hands of the student.

Student Notification Letter (confirmed forgery)

Date:

Student name
Address
Address

Dear Mr/Ms:

Our office has received notification from [Name of Institution] that the documents you have submitted in application for admission to [Your Institution] are not authentic.

(Optional) Specifically, [Name of Institution] has no record of your attendance at their institution. In addition, the academic record submitted was issued to another student.

Submission of misleading or fraudulent information is grounds for denying a request for admission. We regret to inform you that your application will no longer be considered.

Sincerely,

Name
Title

cc: Academic department

Most institutions guarantee confidentiality and therefore, it is not recommended that you share the information you receive from the issuing institution outside of your own institution.

It is important to remember that you are obliged to inform your student (and academic departments if they are involved in the admission process) when you have received satisfactory confirmation that the credentials presented are authentic.

Student Notification Letter (confirmed authentic)

Date:

Student name
Address
Address

Dear Mr/Ms:

Our office has received a satisfactory response from [Name of Institution] that the documents you have submitted in application for admission are true copies of your academic record.

We will now continue our consideration of your application for admission. We will make our decision regarding your admission shortly and will notify you of our decision in writing as soon as possible.

Thank you for your patience,

Sincerely,

Name
Title

cc: Academic department

Summary

Your best advice in preventing fraud or misinformation in the admission process is to develop formal guidelines and procedures for reviewing the documentation submitted to your office. You should ensure that you and your staff are familiar with your legal obligations, as well as those of the student. Make sure that your office follows procedures consistently and avoids being rushed into making decisions by the applicant or others on your campus. Students should be made aware of deadlines and understand that they are firm and that there are no exceptions. Always request official documentation and originals when warranted and never issue a Form I-20 or IAP-66 without them. (See Chapter 11—Admitting International Students: The Student Visa.)

Above all, remember that the number of altered and fraudulent documents in any given applicant pool is small—don't become paranoid or overcome with undue suspicion. Consult with your colleagues to confirm the suspicions you have and, when in doubt, verify.

CHAPTER 8

Determining Transfer Credit from International Academic Credentials

Mindset and Mechanics

Transferring credit from international institutions and organizations does not have to be a daunting task. You simply need to learn some basic concepts and mechanics.

The rules and practices for determining transfer credit from U.S. institutions are usually clearly defined. It is essential to first understand your institutional practices and guidelines for transfer credit from domestic institutions prior to evaluating transfer credit from abroad. These policies should be used in determining the transfer of credit from international institutions.

Assumptions

Before analyzing an international credential to determine the possibility of transfer credit, there are a number of assumptions that should be considered:

- Postsecondary-level course work can be offered at secondary institutions abroad and might warrant advanced standing credit. This may be comparable to awarding Advanced Placement credit courses for AP courses offered in U.S. high schools. *(An example is the granting of Advanced Placement credit for Advanced Level examinations in the British system of education.)*
- Postsecondary-level course work completed at postsecondary institutions may warrant transfer credit at your institution if the course content is comparable in level, substance and depth to your own institution's courses.
- Course units/credits are not a precise measurement of effort required or knowledge gained. Assume that roughly one year of academic work abroad is approximately the same as one year of academic work in the U.S. Upon research, the credit may vary up or down.
- Two 16-week semesters are about the same as two 15-week semesters or three 11-week quarters. As a guideline, use 30 semester units as the amount a typical undergraduate-level U.S. student would earn in one academic year, and 24 semester units as the amount that a typical graduate-level U.S. student would earn in one academic year.
- The starting point for the ratio of in-class to out-of-class study time is 1:2 (i.e., for every hour spent inside the classroom, two hours of work is expected outside the classroom). Laboratory work or practical exercises is worth 1/2 in-class time.
- Courses have some type of "weight" as measurement. It may be denoted in classroom hours, practical/laboratory hours, credits, maximum points, or some other means of measure.
- Credit value should not be given to courses for which the home country institution does not assign unit value.
- Courses should be completed at institutions that have a standard of recognition in the country, such as Ministry of Education, that may be compared to U.S. accreditation, if that is your policy for awarding credit from U.S. institutions.

Other Transferability Factors

The following factors are also important to consider in the transfer credit process:

- *Theoretical/practical mix.* Ascertain if the course work was heavily weighted towards practical contact. Use your guidelines for handling this type of domestic transfer credit if this is the case.
- *Level.* Examine the prerequisites for enrolling in the course and ensure that the level is postsecondary. Try to ascertain if the course work was lower division, upper division, graduate, or post-graduate level.
- *Technical/vocational/academic.* Technical and vocational programs may also include academic course work that should be considered.
- *Course syllabi* should be used to evaluate content-breadth and depth of the course.
- *Duplicate course work.* Be careful not to transfer duplicate course work from two or more schools.
- *Noncredit courses.* Institutional policies for evaluating noncredit courses should determine how these courses are treated from the international host system (i.e., military, physical education, remedial).
- *English courses.* Usually, English writing, speaking, and grammar courses are language acquisition courses and are not comparable to our freshman English composition courses. There are exceptions.
- *Assessment.* There should be some evidence of assessment before awarding transfer credit (e.g., external exams, a grade, a pass, a paper, etc.)
- *Age of the course.* A course offered many years ago in a field that changes rapidly (i.e., computer science) may not warrant transfer credit today.
- *Availability of course descriptions.* Sometimes course descriptions are very difficult and/or expensive for the student to obtain. However, if you show an example of what you need, the student can almost always obtain the required documents.
- *Credit.* If you award "blanket credit," you should explain to the student that none, some, or all of the credit may, or may not, be applicable to his or her degree program. This should be done at the point of admission.
- *Grade of the course.* Some countries do not have the concept of "marginally passing" or the U.S. "D" grade. In these countries, the lowest possible passing grade would be the equivalent of the U.S. "C" grade.
- *Policy Formulation.* Have clearly established institutional guidelines for who or what body makes transfer credit policy decisions. An established procedure is necessary for consistency and fairness and responses to questions and challenges.
- *Translations* and original language documents. Work from translations and original language documents. Translators can be very liberal in their translations. You should learn key words and phrases in the original language to spot check translations.
- *Comparability.* Aim for comparability assessments rather than exact equivalency assessments. You will need to decide if there are enough similarities present to make comparability decisions.
- *Classroom time.* Do not assume all classroom time is lecture or laboratory time. Students in some countries spend more time in class, but they are doing homework.
- *Superior Systems.* It is not usually productive to get into debates about one educational system being superior/inferior to another. The best approach is to consider them different and look at a consistent set of quantitative and qualitative factors.
- *Placement Recommendations.* Placement recommendations are just that. Do not fall into the trap of ignoring your own institutional needs and requirements in favor of fast, easy, and generic statements meant only as a guideline for a broad array of institutional types.

Mechanics of Awarding Credit

Once you decide that transfer credit is warranted, how do you decide about how much credit to give? Do you give only as much as a similar course at your institution yields? Do you give whatever the foreign school gave? What happens when no credits are listed? Here is a formula that you can use as a guideline to convert foreign course weights into U.S. units:

Foreign Units
_____ = Course Divisor
U.S. Units

(Foreign units divided by the usual amount of credit a U.S. student earns in a similar amount of time equals the course conversion divisor.)

Foreign Units = whatever course weight is assigned to courses completed in one semester, one year, two years, four years, etc.

U.S. Units = the corresponding amount of U.S. units a student would have earned in the same amount of time used in foreign units

Course Divisor = What you will divide each foreign course units by to get U.S. units

Foreign Units

For foreign units, do you use units earned in one term? Or one year? Or over the entire length of a program?

Priority For Determining Amount of Foreign Units is To Use

1. The entire length of the program, *then*
2. The amount actually completed in an incomplete program, *then*
3. The amount earned in one term

The entire official length of the program is preferable because it takes into account that a student may take more courses one term than in another, or the student may have practical requirements during certain terms. The formula assumes full-time study, so double check to make sure the student was enrolled full-time.

For example, if a student completes a 5-year program with a total of 210 units, use that figure for foreign units.

U.S. Units

Following the example above, since we are comparing five-year programs, we need to consider that a U.S. student would complete approximately 150 semester units in the same amount of time. So use 150 units.

Course Divisor

Foreign Units or	210	equals	1.4 (Course Divisor)
U.S. Units	150		

Example:
Course Work Taken at XYZ University

First Semester (15 weeks)	Units	Grade
Social Science 101	12	A
Life Science	18	B
Language	5	D
The Pure Theory of Math	15	C

We are assuming that the institution is recognized/accredited, the student attended full-time, and the course work meets our transferability requirements.

The student completed 50 XYZ units in one term. Obviously the weighting scale is very different from our own, so we need to use our conversion formula.

To do this, we need to know what a U.S. student would earn in one term. This would be approximately 15 semester units.

Foreign Units/U.S. Units = 50/15 = 3.33 = Course Divisor

Now we have to go back and divide each foreign course by the course divisor to get U.S. units.

First Semester (15 weeks)	Foreign Units		U.S. Units
Social Science	12 divided by 3.33	=	3.60
Life Science	18 divided by 3.33	=	5.41
Language	5 divided by 3.33	=	1.50
The Pure Theory of Math	15 divided by 3.33	=	4.50
Totals:	50		15.01

So, 1. We reduced the foreign credits by 3.33.
2. You can round off numbers sensibly (i.e., 5.41 can be changed to 5.50).

Example 1:
Using Three Semesters

First Semester (17 weeks)	Units	Grade
Music	0.0	Excellent
Physical Science	1.0	Good
Math	0.5	Good
Foreign Language	0.2	Fair

Second Semester (17 weeks)	Units	Grade
Biology I	0.35	Excellent
Art History	0.15	Exempt
Language	1.50	Fair
Chinese History	0.75	Good

Third Semester (17 weeks)	Units	Grade
Biology II	0.52	Good
Fine Arts	0.12	Fair
European History	1.22	Fair
Language	0.42	Good
Math	0.25	Excellent
Chinese History	0.78	Fair
Agriculture	0.96	Good

The student now has three semesters with 8.57 units completed. Note that two courses were "blue lined" (not considered for credit) since we do not count credit for courses with 0 unit values or for courses not taken. Also note that the course distribution among terms is not equal. It's difficult to tell whether a student took a light load two semesters or a heavy load the third semester. Since this is all the information we have, we're going to average it out over the three terms.

Foreign Units/U.S. Units = 8.57/45 = .19 = Course Divisor

First Semester (17 weeks)	Foreign Units		U.S. Units
Music	0.0 divided by .19	=	0
Physical Science	1.0 divided by .19	=	5.26
Math	0.5 divided by .19	=	2.63
Foreign Language	0.2 divided by .19	=	1.05
Etc....			

So, you can INCREASE foreign units, too...but this is rare.

Example 2:
Course Weight Given in Classroom Hours

1st Year	Hours
Language	200
History	100
Math	400
Music	50

First, notice that this is for one year's worth of course work. Second, there are at least two ways to convert this to U.S. credits. One is figuring out how many hours per week per course there are (if you don't know the number of weeks studied, you can assume 32 weeks in the year. One method to employ: total the number of hours as if they were units. A U.S. student would earn approximately 30 units in one academic year. Plug these numbers into the formula, and you get:

Foreign Units/U.S. Units = 750/30 = 25 = Course Divisor

1st Year	Foreign Hours		U.S. Semester Units
Language	200 divided by 25	=	8
History	100 divided by 25	=	4
Math	400 divided by 25	=	16
Music	50 divided by 25	=	2

Total U.S. units is 30.

Example 3:
Course Weights As Maximum Possible Marks

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka use a different method to give weight (unit value) to a course, basing it on the strength and importance of the course.

The maximum value granted is 200 points. A course with less weight might be assigned 75 points, which means a perfect grade would be 75 out of a possible 75 points.

Year 1	Maximum Possible Marks	Marks Obtained
Biology	100	56
Zoology	200	140
Botany	75	53
Sanskrit	50	26

We see that Zoology is given more weight than Biology. Sanskrit is given the least weight. In reality, the weights range widely. But whatever they are, our SAME FORMULA should still work.

Total the maximum possible marks for one year which is 425. We know that a U.S. student would earn about 30 semester units in that one year's time. Using our formula, we get:

Foreign Units/U.S. Units = 425/30 = 14.17 = Course Divisor

Year 1	Maximum Possible Marks		U.S. Sem. Units
Biology	100 divided by 14.17	=	7.06
Zoology	200 divided by 14.17	=	14.11
Botany	75 divided by 14.17	=	5.29
Sanskrit	50 divided by 14.17	=	3.53

Total U.S. Units:29.99 or 30

Example 4:
No Course Weight

Sometimes there is no course weight information available. If you are unable to obtain this information from the institution, you can assign equal weight to all courses to obtain a total number of units. Then, use your institution's course values as a reference point for final credit per course.

Initially, assign each course a credit unit of "1."

First Year	Assumed Units	Grade
Course 1	1	A
Course 2	1	C
Course 3	1	D
Course 4	1	B

Using our formula (remembering typical U.S. units in one year would be 30 semester units),

Foreign Units/U.S. Units = 4/30 = .13 = Course Divisor

First Year	Foreign Units		U.S. Units
Course 1	1 divided by .13	=	7.69
Course 2	1 divided by .13	=	7.69
Course 3	1 divided by .13	=	7.69
Course 4	1 divided by .13	=	7.69

Total U.S. Semester Units = 30.76

Finally, sometimes students request that you grant them more credit for their courses that you initially awarded. Here are some tips to handle these situations.

- Go back and look at the documents and program. Ask yourself if it is possible for the student to have completed similar depth and breadth in the foreign country as a U.S. student would have completed in the comparable U.S. course.
- Have one of your faculty review the course syllabi.
- If the amount of increase is modest, remember this is not an exact science. Bumping up credits a few tenths won't bring out the transfer credit police. But there are limits, and you should be able to justify your actions. Be nice, but be fair!

CHAPTER 9

Roles and Issues for Community Colleges

Introduction

This chapter will familiarize the new practitioner, as well as the experienced professional, with the role and function of the community colleges in international education, specifically enrollment services (admission). It will outline perspectives that influence recruitment, application processing, admission, credential evaluation, and initial advising. This chapter will describe some strategies related to successful practices for the enrollment of international students in the community college sector. This chapter focuses largely on the comprehensive community college. Two-year technical colleges may also find most of the narrative to be applicable.

Background

The enrollment of international students in U.S. postsecondary institutions is substantial, standing at almost a half million students. Of those, about 17 percent are in community colleges. Upon closer inspection of the total undergraduate enrollment only, about 30 percent are in community colleges. On the other hand, when considering the overall enrollment in community colleges in the U.S., international students comprise only 1.5 percent of the total community college enrollment. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, Institute for International Education)

In the U.S., community colleges serve a multitude of audiences, with services ranging from university transfer programs to technical training to leisure education to pre-college instruction. International students are most likely to be involved in three major aspects of the community college functions: university transfer, technical training, and English language instruction. For the most part, community colleges provide services that are effective for international students beginning their college careers, though there are occasions when international students with previous extensive university studies find community college enrollment meets some of their needs.

Unique challenges face the international student recruitment and admission professionals. Chief among those challenges is the lack of understanding of the transfer function of the community college. Since student mobility and inter-institutional transfer is not typical in many countries, many students, parents, and funding agencies may not intuitively perceive the community college as a satisfactory option. This is further complicated by the desire of an international undergraduate to "settle" somewhere, something which may not be predictable given the student's need to transfer to a baccalaureate institution upon completion of lower division coursework at the community college. Another challenge concerns the perceived applicability of a U.S. associate degree for the student who returns home upon graduation. Finally, since most community colleges do not provide residence halls, students seeking a college campus that can meet all of their school, social, and living needs may prefer the residential environment found on most baccalaureate campuses.

These challenges are not insurmountable, and indeed can be offset by opportunities not found on many university campuses, such as low tuition, small classes, short-term technical training, and, in some cases, less stringent admission requirements.

Community college professionals also face limits generated by their own institutions. Though rapidly growing, the interest of community colleges in international exchange is relatively recent. Most community colleges focus their resources toward their local constituencies, and often find it difficult to rationalize the allocation of resources to staffing international offices and funding recruitment campaigns abroad. As a sense of the outcomes associated with globalization grows, and as community colleges expand their strategies of finding and allocating resources, the climate is becoming more congenial to international exchange, but it

still may be a struggle. The American Association of Community College's policy statement on international education promotes the strategic position and experience of the community college sector to participate in international education and exchange. Additional Resource 1 (page 84) contains the text of this statement.

Recruitment Issues

The foremost task of a recruitment plan is to identify the goals of the effort as well as the resources available. One of the best indicators of success is that the enrollment of international students and the consequent support activities, however large or small, are supported by the leaders of the institution. Ideally, at least one knowledgeable professional should direct recruitment and enrollment efforts, though they may be carried out by a variety of different staff, and perhaps faculty.

Second, it is advantageous to identify the desired mix of students in relation to current trends in international education. Over-reliance on a particular country or region can be risky, though a sharp focus often is the best use of limited resources. Also, some countries are more likely to yield students interested in a U.S. community college education than others. For example, because the majority of students from China and India are enrolled in graduate programs, those countries may challenge recruitment efforts. Certain technical programs may also have varying attractiveness to students in different regions of the world.

Third, an analysis of college strengths and weaknesses, programs, and services should be completed. For example, strong and flexible technical programs may be conducive to marketing to governments and agencies looking for training contracts. Technical programs with internship partnerships with local businesses and industry can be appealing. Also, specific university articulation agreements can strengthen the appeal of the transfer program. Open entry ESL programs can also lend themselves to strong promotion.

Strategies for recruitment depend upon the goals, strength of the institution, and resources. The continuum of strategies ranges from passive to active, from "armchair" activities to travel abroad.

The most basic recruitment strategy is to produce an effective brochure—and web site—directed at prospective international students, along with an application form that is applicable to the information needed from non-U.S. applicants; the standard brochures and forms used for domestic students may be both uninformative and discouraging. The instructions for application procedures, and the admission criteria should be clearly stated. Because of the challenges described in the section above, special attention should be paid to describing the programs and services of the community college, articulation opportunities, cost, accommodations, etc.

As the desired geographic targets emerge, consideration (needs to) should be given to the best method of reaching those students. Advertising, mailings to overseas advising agencies, the use of agents, personal recruitment travel abroad, and promotion of the college's web site will vary in suitability.

An emerging trend in community college recruitment is the consortial approach. By pooling limited resources, and by enhancing the presence of the community college in the higher education landscape, consortia can be a valuable tool for individual community colleges. For example, the Washington Community College Consortium, comprised of nine community colleges, produces a brochure, hosts a reception and/or booth at NAFSA, and shares knowledge through regular meetings, for a cost that is affordable to the individual colleges. The Consortium is described at the end of this chapter. See Chapter 2—International Recruitment Principles and Practices for additional information on recruitment.

Admission Issues

Each community college should first assure that it has the proper INS authorization to admit international students on an F and/or M visa. Give close evaluation to the requirements of the M status to determine its appropriateness; an F may offer more educational options to a student. (See Chapter 11—Admitting International Students.)

Community colleges face the dilemma of thinking of themselves as open door institutions. While this may be desirable for the enrollment of local residents, it does not necessarily have to be true when admitting

international students. Support services and potential student success should be considered when identifying the minimum qualifications of international students. For example, the level of ESL instruction available to incoming international students should be weighed when determining what, if any, minimum language skill should be demonstrated in the application process.

There have been incidents where a student admitted to a community college may be denied a visa in their home country because of a perceived bias against community college education. While it is always difficult to accurately identify the reasons for a visa denial, the community college can make efforts to assure that the admission packet provides the student with information that has a positive effect on their visa application. The letter of admission should clearly state the admission status, preparation for attending the college, and the arrival process. The packet should include information about the college itself, such as its accreditation, degrees, international population, public or private status, articulation agreements, ESL instruction, etc.

The timeliness of the application and admission process can be an issue for community colleges. Unlike many baccalaureate institutions, it may be perceived that community colleges are more accessible at any time. While flexible deadlines are certainly the prerogative of any admission office, it is wise to assure that proper time is allowed for the review of all qualifications, credentials, financial standing, and visa application or status.

One final note regarding admission concerns the maintenance of student records. Community colleges, because of their open door process, and because their enrollment processes are usually continuous as so many students move in and out of enrollment, may need to create a separate records retention process for international records submitted at the time of admission. Good record-keeping will assure that the official transcripts from the home country, the original financial statements, etc, are available if needed during the student's attendance and after.

Credential Evaluation

Like colleagues in baccalaureate institutions, community college enrollment services personnel must make decisions about the process of credential evaluation. At the application stage, a process should be in place to assure that the applicant has the appropriate educational background. At the admission or entry stage, credentials should be reviewed to determine if the student is eligible for transfer credit; this is a particularly critical issue for students who are monitoring the costs of their education and want their previous postsecondary education, if any, recognized.

The use of transfer credit from a non-U.S. institution goes beyond the purposes of the community college's own degree requirements, since it may affect the student's experience of gaining advanced standing at a university to which he or she might transfer. The inappropriate use of transfer credit from a non-U.S. institution might give the incorrect impression that the university to which the student transfers may accept the credit in the same manner.

The text above provides an argument for community college personnel to devote adequate resources to the admission and credential evaluation process, and to develop a thoughtful approach with trained staff. Some community colleges decide not to devote extensive resources to credential evaluation—the staff, the training, the library of resources, etc.—and utilize credential evaluation agencies. (In those cases, the student most often bears the expense of the credential evaluation.) Other colleges are able to support the continuous training of staff in understanding and evaluating educational credentials. However, even the colleges that receive the reports from the credential evaluation agency must be in a position of interpreting them, and applying the credits suggested as college-level by the agency. The implication is that colleges must take responsibility of basic training in credential evaluation, or take the risk of making poor decisions. This responsibility is particularly important when using credit toward an articulated degree (see next page) or toward a degree that is linked to license requirements. (See Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8—Credential Evaluation.)

Academic Advising

The ability of international students to start at a community college, earn about two years of college credit at a low tuition rate, and then transfer to a university, is a positive aspect for community college recruitment strategies. Careful attention should be given to how prospective students are advised of the opportunities, how their language proficiency may affect their plans, and how continuing students connect with possible destination institutions to meet their international admission criteria. And, as described above, the role that credential evaluation plays in that advising can be critical.

Advisory information should be contained in materials for prospective students. Specifically, many prospective students may base their decision on whether or not to attend a community college based on how clearly the college communicates about the transferability of credit to baccalaureate institutions. New students should participate in a thorough advising session upon their arrival, and be assigned a method for continuous contact with an advisor. Perhaps more so than our domestic students, international students have a significant investment riding on their academic planning and transfer decision making.

Not all community college students enroll with the intention of academic studies and/or transfer. Many enroll for the purpose of pursuing a one- or two-year technical program. Advising is very important to their success as well. For example, the special vocabulary of a technical program may present unique challenges to evaluating their readiness, or the rate at which they will progress. Schools that have a selective admission process for their technical programs must make a clear statement of this at the outset.

Whether a community college centralizes advising with its staff specialists, or whether international students are mainstreamed into the regular advising scheme, the college has a responsibility to offer the international students the advising resources he/she needs to make sense of a new system and new expectations.

Articulation Relationships

Many community colleges maintain transfer agreements with nearby or regional baccalaureate institutions, often identifying specific degrees and/or courses that transfer. These relationships and agreements are of inestimable value to the international exchange process. However, the existence of these agreements may not necessarily include some of the special situations relevant to international students. For example, baccalaureate institutions may apply different admission criteria to international students than domestic students, or the use of credit from non-U.S. institutions may be restricted. Community college leaders would be wise to understand the differences, if any, and convey these to their students.

In addition to articulation relationships that may already exist, it is possible to construct special agreements for the benefit of international students. For example, baccalaureate institutions that are interested in boosting their international enrollment may be willing to recruit in partnership, and/or to make special agreements, such as waiving TOEFL requirements if appropriate course work is successfully completed at the community college.

Articulation agreements with other overseas institutions are also valuable. Additional Resource #2, at the end of this chapter, demonstrates an agreement between a U.S. community college and a Japanese two-year college that offers benefits to both the students and the institutions.

Issues Related to Non-F-1 or Immigrant Students

The term "international student" can refer to many types of students, such as refugees or recent immigrants, not just those on a student visa. Program directors need to clarify the differences between and among various programs for non-nationals, or non-English-speaking, or non-immigrants. Eligibility and appropriateness may vary for such programs. Given the diverse population within most community colleges, it is important to train staff in proper procedures in working with students of such different needs.

Non-visa students may also present the community college with the challenge of credential evaluation. As described in the section above, community colleges need to make clear decisions about their capacity to understand and evaluate credentials.

Enrollment Management Issues

Like the baccalaureate institutions, community colleges may regard international student enrollment as an important factor in their enrollment management. The added tuition revenue is one advantage, and the enhancement to the campus climate is another. Sometimes, proximity to a local university results in enrollment pressure by dependents of the university's F-1 students, or by international students who need to improve their eligibility criteria to enter the university.

The risks and successes of identifying international student enrollment as a significant factor in enrollment management are several. Primarily, there is the ever-present possibility of fluctuations in international enrollment due to external causes; a good example is the recent economic crisis in Asia which resulted in a sudden drop in enrollments. Another challenge is defending international student enrollment when many perceive the community college as a locally-funded, locally focused institution.

Nonetheless, the opportunities that arise with international enrollment, the revenue benefits, and the springboard to building more international partnerships in an increasingly global education market make the effort worthwhile.

Summary

The community college environment engenders unique challenges in international enrollment. Thoughtful planning, trained staff, and strong partnerships can have a positive effect on the success of students and the viability of the international program.

Other Resources

O'Hara, M., Stedman, J., and Raftus, K. *International Student Recruitment* (1999). Washington DC: NAFSA.
Chase, A. and Mahoney, J.R. *Global Awareness in Community Colleges* (1996). Washington DC: AACC
AACC Policy Statement on International Education. http://www.aacc.nche.edu/services/international/policy.htm (Sept, 2000).

Additional Resource 1:
American Association of Community Colleges Policy Statement on International Education

The United States must remain a leader in the global community of the 21st century to maintain its educational and economic vitality. The citizenry must be prepared to engage in worldwide activities related to education, business, industry, and social interaction. To ensure the survival and well-being of our communities, it is imperative that community colleges develop a globally and multiculturally competent citizenry. Community colleges are strategically positioned and experienced to respond to this educational and economic development imperative by educating and training individuals to function successfully in a multicultural and advanced technological environment that crosses all boundaries of education, communications, language, and business. Meeting this challenge, community colleges provide:

- internationalized curricula;
- multicultural activities and programs;
- foreign language programs;
- cultural and ethnic studies;
- study abroad programs;
- faculty and student exchange programs;
- professional development;
- technical assistance to other countries and their businesses/industries;
- local/state/national and international forums;
- international student enrollment;

and other appropriate education and training programs to ensure a well-trained and technically literate workforce, functioning collaboratively with other countries of the world. Community colleges are in a strong position to meet these international challenges with a widely dispersed national network committed to accessibility and service to the local community. The American Association of Community Colleges will actively advocate this international role for community colleges and will articulate this mission to the Congress and the administration, federal agencies, and other appropriate national and international organizations.

Additional Resource 2:
International Exchange Agreement
ABC Junior College & Everett Community College

In order to promote international understanding and cooperation between the people of the United States of America and the people of Japan, as represented by Everett Community College (here-in-after called Everett) and ABC Junior College (here-in-after ABC), the Presidents of these two institutions approve of the following agreement. The primary purpose of this agreement is to provide graduates of ABC with the opportunity to complete an Associate of General Studies degree program at Everett Community College.

I. Student Acceptance Agreement

A. Everett Agrees:

1. To accept students from ABC, as recommended by ABC, as sophomore standing students at Everett.
2. These students recommended by ABC shall be accepted by Everett on the condition that they fulfill the criteria provided in Articles B1 and B2 of this agreement.
   - To accept 60 credits earned by ABC graduates and provide the graduates with a statement of courses needed to complete the Associate of General Studies degree. The typical courses required for completion are attached to this agreement as Appendix A.

3. To issue the appropriate I-20 forms for ABC graduates admitted to Everett by March 1 of each year.
4. To enroll each ABC student in a "bridge" intensive English language program in their first term, Spring Quarter. During that time students are expected to take an intensive ESL course and may be allowed to take one regular course, and to prepare for the regular courses in the Summer Quarter. Intensive English language classes are available to them after their first quarter, but are optional.
5. To provide the same academic, residence, and student services for ABC graduates as are provided for all Everett students. This is contingent upon the payment of all applicable fees—including international student tuition, student fees, living expenses, and host family program costs. Homestay arrangements will be facilitated through the same agency available to other international students, for the same fees; this will also support airport pick-up.
6. To provide a transcript of each ABC graduate to ABC Junior College within one month after the completion of each term, in accordance with a signed release by each ABC graduate.
7. To award the Associate of General Studies degree to ABC graduates who successfully complete degree requirements.

B. ABC Agrees:

1. To select participants for this program who have:
   - Demonstrated general aptitude and proficiency for college level education. ABC graduates must achieve the equivalent to a USA 2.00 Grade Point Average (GPA) on all previous college work;
   - Demonstrated proficiency in the English language, in February of the year of enrollment, by scoring at least 440 on either the paper-based international or institutional TOEFL, or 123 on the computerized TOEFL;
   - Satisfactory attitude towards study in a foreign culture;
   - All health requirements including immunizations and Tuberculosis testing prior to registration at Everett.

2. ABC will select its students from the results of a final examination to be held in February of each year. ABC will notify Everett, no later than February 10, of the students selected for the program. For each student selected for the program, ABC will forward to Everett the following application packet by February 10:
   - international student application form and fee
   - affidavit of financial support
   - certificate of immunizations
   - certificate of TOEFL score
   - ABC transcript as of the date of submission, in English
   - letter of recommendation from the ABC Junior College President

   Note: A final student transcript will be sent from ABC College between April 1 and July 1.
3. It is understood that individual ABC graduates will bear the cost of all applicable fees including tuition, student fees, and room and board fees at Everett.
4. ABC will require its students to be covered by medical and hospitalization insurance that is satisfactory to Everett.
5. To consult with Everett to confirm the English language ability of ABC graduates in late August or early September of each year before the commencement of the Fall term.

6. To tailor its curriculum in ABC to assure that ABC graduates can complete their associate degree at Everett in approximately one year.

C. Alternatives

1. Students who do not meet the minimum TOEFL score described above may still be considered for admission to Everett Community College as long as they meet all other criteria. Students whose TOEFL score is below 440 may be required to enroll in ESL courses at Everett Community College for a period longer than one quarter.
2. Students who wish to pursue a different Associate degree, such as a transfer or technical degree may also be considered for this program. However, Everett Community College will make an individual degree plan with the student, and it may be necessary to spend longer than one year at Everett to complete all requirements.

II. Evaluation of the Program

A. The terms of this agreement shall be for five (5) years, commencing June 1, 1999, or as of the date of the last signature—whichever is later. Before the program begins in 2000, the two parties will have agreed to a plan and criteria for evaluating whether or not the program is successful.

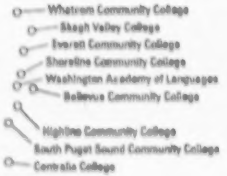
B. If this evaluation provides information that leads either Everett or ABC to conclude that it is not successful, twelve (12) months prior notice on the part of either party will be required for termination of the agreement.

C. Even if the agreement is terminated, both parties will continue to perform their obligation until all currently enrolled students have completed their education at Everett.

This agreement may be modified by mutual accord through an addendum signed by the Presidents of both Everett and ABC. The provisions herein established fully represent the understanding of both parties. There are no additional interpretations, oral or written, that are not already incorporated within this agreement.

Students who attend Everett Community College under the terms of this agreement will be pursuing an Associate of General Studies degree and will need to complete, at least, these courses at Everett Community College:

- English 98 or 101, or Speech 100 or 101
- one 5-credit math course, numbered Math 17 or higher
- one 5-credit Humanities course as listed on our AAS-Option II distribution list
- one 5-credit Social Sciences course as listed on our AAS-Option II distribution list
- one 5-credit Natural Sciences course as listed on our AAS-Option II distribution list
- (the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences courses must be selected from three different disciplines)
- at least five additional credits in college-level courses



The Western Washington Consortium of International Education is made up of a diverse group of educational institutions located along the western half of Washington State from near the Canadian border in the north to the state capitol in Olympia. The institutions offer a wide range of programming including the first two years of university education, specific technical and vocational programs, and intensive English programs. All of them are located in appealing communities that offer a safe and comfortable environment, a variety of recreational possibilities and friendly, supportive people.

Come take a look with us at the possibilities.

Choice, quality and flexibility are cornerstones of **Bellevue Community College** education. Bellevue Community College, which is located in the posh east side of Seattle, sends more graduates to four-year schools than any other community college in the state. It also has innovative technical programs supported by industry approval and input. Based on the strength of its reputation and corporate and educational partnerships, the college was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to create the Northwest Center for Emerging Technologies. Rolling Stone magazine has named BCC among the 10 best community colleges in the United States.

The city of Centralia boasts the oldest community college in the state. Founded in 1925, **Centralia Community College** has led community college education in Washington State with a mission to develop individual student potential. Comprehensive programs responsive to technological, economic, and social changes are offered. Average class size is 24. Transferable programs in 39 disciplines and 15 technical programs are offered.

Everett Community College is just about 40 km north of Seattle. This college prides itself on small classes as well as on its university transfer and technical hands-on learning programs. Students have access to 13 computer labs and internet connectivity is readily available. The goal of Everett Community College instructors and staff members is to help students.

Highline Community College is located in the suburban community of Des Moines, just 20 minutes from Seattle. The campus offers a spectacular view of the Puget Sound Waterway and Olympic Mountains. Highline has a strong university transfer program and many excellent technical programs. Intensive English classes begin every month. Services for students include orientation, arrangements for living with American families, academic advising, and activities that help international students get to know American students.

Shoreline Community College is located just 10 minutes from downtown Seattle. The campus is nestled among evergreen trees in a peaceful park-like setting, and is just a short distance from the Pacific Ocean and to skiing in the mountains. Shoreline has no TOEFL requirement and international students are encouraged to take college classes at the same time as advanced ESL courses. Shoreline provides personal attention, small classes, and a much lower cost of living. Shoreline has a very good transfer record to local four-year colleges and universities, our programs and activities are designed to connect you to US students and culture. Shoreline Community College is the gateway to student success.

Moving south, we travel to Mt. Vernon, voted as "Best Small Town Environment in America", the home of **Skagit Valley College.** The college has a "No TOEFL policy" for admission. It provides personal attention, smaller classes, and a much lower cost of living. It also has a very good transfer record to four-year schools and has an active program for international students to meet Americans.

South Puget Sound Community College is a public two-year institution located minutes from downtown Olympia, the seat of government in Washington State. Students at the college enjoy a unique blend of small-town friendliness, business and political activities. The college is surrounded by a beautiful wilderness and scenic pathways, which take you through the attractive campus. The college offers an intensive English program, academic transfer and technical degree programs and certificates as well as various student services such as Homestay, free tutoring, transfer assistance and student clubs and organizations for all students.

In the heart of Seattle, you can discover **Washington Academy of Languages,** a unique school specializing in language training, language teacher training, and translation and interpretation services. Courses begin every five weeks year-round and include Intensive English Programs, English Study/Tour, semi-intensive courses in twelve languages, and graduate Certificate Programs in Teaching English as a Second Language and Bilingual Education offered in cooperation with Seattle Pacific University.

Whatcom Community College is located in Bellingham, Washington. This small, safe city is near the Canadian border and Vancouver, British Columbia and about 1½ hours drive north of Seattle. The college has an excellent university transfer program and an Intensive English Language program. Western Washington University is also located in Bellingham. Whatcom's instructors and staff are friendly and helpful. Student services include free tutoring, a peer orientation program, airport pick-up, homestay placement and a strong activities program that features an International Friendship Club which matches American and International students.

Choosing one of the Consortium institutions is challenging because we all offer wonderful opportunities, a wide array of programs and a delightful opportunity to experience the culture and personality of Washington State. Please feel welcome to contact us for further information.

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CHAPTER 10

English Proficiency and Admission Policy

Among an international admission officer's many responsibilities is determining whether an international student applicant has sufficient English language proficiency to be admitted to the institution generally and to a given degree program specifically. Appropriate screening for English proficiency is critical to establishing an applicant's minimum ability to undertake a course of study with success, and it is critical to supporting the institution's ability to provide instruction and services to such students. Fortunately, admission officers have access to multiple resources and strong allies in setting and applying proficiency policy. The teaching of English as a second language (ESL) is a professional field in its own right, complete with extensive scholarship on proficiency testing, and admission professionals have developed admission practices which effectively screen applicants relative to language preparedness; it is not necessary for new admission personnel to begin again or to be experts in ESL testing and methodology to make informed decisions about proficiency. Instead, an admission officer has these tasks: to be informed consumers of assessment information, to know the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to determining proficiency as part of admission decisions, to understand the impact of proficiency policies on international students both before and after their admission, to help implement institutional objectives, and to build relationships with the groups which provide knowledge of and affect the administration of the proficiency policy, including administration, students, departmental or subject area admission personnel, and ESL professionals.

This chapter provides a foundation for new international admission officers who are involved in making and/or applying language proficiency policy. It considers an officer's roles in applying existing policies, reviewing and revising existing policies, and developing new policy, and it touches on the campus relationships that arise due to these roles. More immediately useful, perhaps, it also provides 1) descriptions of typical systems for establishing English language proficiency, including overviews of commonly used standardized tests and other assessment and admission options, and 2) examples of proficiency policies currently used by a variety of institutions.

Admission Officer as Policy Actor

An admission officer, depending on specific position and responsibilities, the size of the admission office, and the institution's services and procedures, is involved in activities relating to English language proficiency policies in several ways. Most likely, a new admission officer inherits an existing proficiency policy to apply to international student applicants. In this case, first steps are to review the policy and its goals, study its components, and understand its reasoning relative to the institution's admission policies and goals. While these first steps may seem self-evident, they are not wasted exercises. Policies may be well-conceived or poorly designed, effective or ineffective, up-to-date or out-of-date, may be well-articulated with other campus needs or unrelated, even oppositional. To apply the policy in a consistent and logical way the admission officer will need to understand the context and the implications of the policy, equally with its components.

Further, "existing policy" seldom remains static. With some frequency, for example, the listservs carry messages like these:

> Our English proficiency policy has been in place since 1985 and seems to have worked fairly well, though I've never formally analyzed it. But now I've been asked by my new dean/provost/director to find out what other institutions are doing because students are asking us to accept one of the 'new' tests available in their countries.

or

Despite our TOEFL cut-off of 550 (220 CBT), humanities faculty consistently report that first semester international students are unable to express themselves orally in class.

or

We've been requiring students who have completed a local intensive English program to present a 520 TOEFL or an 80 on the MELAB. Now I've been approached by the IEP director asking us to accept completion of their top English for Academic Preparation level. Their students have always performed very well here after admission.

As these messages illustrate, even when an international student admission office has been in place for some years, re-evaluation of processes is common. Admission officers are often charged with investigating the efficacy of their institution's current proficiency criteria in order to justify continued use or modification. Admission personnel themselves may be initiating review or making the case for change, having determined during repeated application or from student and faculty feedback that the current policy has weaknesses. Admission officers who are in an institution that has not admitted international students before, who are in an office that hasn't handled this function before, or who are codifying a previously ambiguous or subjective system may have the job of developing a new policy.

Policies should be regularly reviewed in any case, and this is especially true of English proficiency policies since new conditions, test features, and assessment approaches can emerge, as illustrated in the last several years by a number of significant developments including not only new assessment approaches but, as well, a growing sophistication among users of proficiency "products"—admission officers, students, university administrators and enrollment managers, employers, and language program administrators. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is still the most widely used standardized proficiency test, but several useful (and heavily marketed) test products are now somewhat widely available and are increasingly accepted as evidence of proficiency and language-related academic preparedness.

In sum, in addition to understanding the logic and features of existing proficiency policy, admission officers will require information about the following when applying, reviewing, or developing proficiency guidelines:

- changes in the testing products and systems already used in the policy
- indications of how the current policy is functioning and whether issues exist, including data on how the students admitted to the institution under the current policy are performing
- new test products and alternative proficiency methods
- ESL experts' research-based as well as practical knowledge
- training and learning opportunities for those determining proficiency, such as conferences, workshops, test provider seminars
- examples of policies in use in similar institutions and indicators of their effectiveness
- clarity of the institution's goals and services for international students
- any specific factors affecting language requirements or language support programs on campus

Campus Context

Admission officers who work with international students typically have multiple formal and informal roles on campus thanks to their extensive knowledge of the cultural, academic, and linguistic patterns of international students generally and the background of their own admitted students particularly. Some of these roles are directly related to language proficiency issues, some generated by the proficiency policy itself, and some by related practical concerns such as student performance, faculty satisfaction, and recruitment obligations.

Multiple policies. An admission officer may be in an institution which has several formal language proficiency policies, typically varying between undergraduate and graduate levels and between disciplines,

particularly at the graduate level. Graduate admission usually requires a higher level of proficiency, as do disciplines and departments which require a higher level of linguistic competence or performance, or a specific kind of linguistic competence or performance such as the need for oral presentation skills. Consider for example the following language-related admission policies applied at the University of California, San Diego, each expressed according to the needs of the admitting department:

> **Undergraduate Information for International Students**
> Academic Requirements, English: Unless your native language is English, verification of proficiency in our language of instruction is required. Please take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) as soon as possible, but not later than December of the year you apply. . . . We require a score of 550 and expect individual section scores to be consistent. A score of 480 on the English section of the SAT I or a GCSE or GCE 'O' level pass in English (as a first language) will also satisfy the English proficiency requirement.
> http://admissions.ucsd.edu/intlinfo.html

> **Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry: The Graduate Program**
> To make admission decisions, the department considers...GRE scores on general test (verbal, quantitative, and analytical); no hard cut-off. GRE advanced test score (either chemistry or biochemistry); no hard cut-off. TOEFL score (minimum 550 on written test or 220 on computer test required; above 600 on written test or 250 on computer test preferred; test date within the past two years).
> http://www-chem.ucsd.edu/Grad/appinfo.html

> **History Department: Admission to the Ph.D. Program**
> ...one or two papers (preferably written for history courses); and scores from the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The GRE subject exam in history is not required. The Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is required for foreign applicants. A minimum score of 550 is required on the TOEFL. Proficiency in a foreign language is not a requirement for admission.... In most areas of concentration, however, knowledge of at least one foreign language will be required during a student's academic career.
> http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/history/PhDAdminInfo.html

When the central admission policy statement sums up the varying requirements, it is helpful to students. The University of Oklahoma provides this consolidated statement of multiple proficiency policies, for example.

> Note to Graduate Applicants:
> Some graduate programs will not review an applicant's credentials for admission until the English proficiency requirement has first been satisfied. At present these programs are: Chemical Engineering (600 TOEFL required), Chemistry, Civil Engineering (575 TOEFL required), Computer Science, Construction Science, Education (except Music Education), Electrical Engineering, Engineering Physics (600 TOEFL required), Environmental Science (575 TOEFL required), Geography, Journalism (must include TWE score), Meteorology, Physics and Astronomy (600 TOEFL required), Political Science, and Public Administration (600 TOEFL required). Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering will not review an applicant's credentials without an official TOEFL score of at least 500 on file.
> http://www.ou.edu/admrec/stuabrd.htm

Another approach is illustrated in the following portions of the admission statements for the University of Northern Iowa regarding undergraduate and graduate English proficiency requirements. Undergraduates must submit:

> A TOEFL score of 550 (paper based) or 213 (computer based) for applicants whose first language is not English. Conditional admission will be considered for students who are academically qualified but do not meet the English proficiency requirement.

Graduates, in addition to other requirements, must submit:

> A TOEFL score of 500 (paper based) or 180 (computer based or higher for applicants whose first language is not English. Many departments require a higher score. For example, a 600 TOEFL score is required if your major is TESOL or computer science.
> http://www.uni.edu/intladm/admissreq.html

This variation among policies in one institution is generally the result of thoughtful policy, department or program-specific language needs, and evaluation of student performance after he/she has been admitted. In some cases multiple proficiency guidelines may not reflect linguistic logic or cogent institutional policy. Differing criteria may have developed from the lack of articulation across the campus, from an organic evolution of policies related to international students, or from anecdotal evidence generated by problematic situations. Whether an admission officer has responsibility to interpret, administer, or reconcile multiple proficiency policies and practices across campus will be part of the job description. In such situations, the admission officer may find himself/herself interfacing with affected departments and counseling students to reconcile policies with broader campus policies and goals.

Others invested in language proficiency. In addition to department or discipline-specific language needs, various other campus sectors have an interest in or have influence on language proficiency policy; it is important for an admission officer to be aware of the perspectives of these sectors. Faculty members may have experiences with various categories of non-native speakers, and generalizing these experiences to international students, may have positive or negative opinions about the effectiveness of the proficiency policy. Faculty members may have a lot of or a little experience with language acquisition and may misjudge linguistic competence and performance based on strength of active or passive skills or culturally-bound student behaviors. The language difficulties and cultural differences of international students may mean more work for them, or may provide an opportunity to give a student excessive help or latitude in performance.

University units and faculty which have specialized linguistic or ESL knowledge will have opinions as well and will generally be useful as resources. The campus may have non-credit or bridging courses for non-native speakers, a writing center or language support lab, a campus intensive English program (IEP), an international teaching assistant (ITA) teaching development center, or other resources. These units have services and programs developed by faculty and other personnel to meet a variety of objectives and it is good for admission officers to be aware of any interest such parties have in or can give to ESL instruction, proficiency testing, or international student admission. In addition to academic objectives, some of these services and programs were developed because of a perceived need for gatekeeping, to bridge service or academic program gaps, or to meet enrollment targets. For example, a typical campus unit, the IEP, usually offers general English at pre-admission levels or targeted academic skills courses, and may provide other services including ITA testing, cultural training, bridging courses, and orientation programs which are not provided elsewhere on campus. IEP personnel may assist with or be largely responsible for international student recruitment. They may interface with the admission office and their operations and programs may be carefully articulated with campus policy, may be essentially (or actually) separate, or something between.

Top-level players who shape the campus context in which the admission officer operates include at least two important groups. Departmental administrators or other senior administrators work to meet a variety of institutional objectives, both academic and non-academic, which influence admission policies or individual admission decisions. For example, graduate programs may rely on ITAs to fill out teaching rosters and this staffing need may influence proficiency policy and admission decisions. The second group is the institution's legal counsel, who may say exactly who must be tested or who cannot be tested, may oversee consistency and regularity of policy, and may set parameters limiting an admission officer's ability to assess individuals or categories of students.

Informing students. All admission officers have the responsibility to present clear proficiency criteria to prospective students and to apply the policy fairly and consistently. Some admission officers have the additional responsibility for international student recruitment, during which they present language proficiency requirements and other communication expectations to prospective students. For these and other reasons, the admission officer must be sure that the policy is clearly stated and consistently presented. In order to do this, admission officers should:

- produce plainly worded and unambiguous statements of the policy in university publications and application materials, or monitor this presentation.
- know the varying language proficiency requirements, if any, between departments and content areas and between graduate and undergraduate policies.
- confirm that all iterations of the policy are accurate and congruent across media and publishing dates, including web sites, departmental and college statements, publications.
- interface with other campus units, such as the IEP or recruitment office, which may be doing extensive marketing to international students or providing admission information, and confirm that they provide accurate information about language requirements.

In sum, the variety of roles an admission officer may be playing requires awareness of broader institutional goals; services to international students beyond admission proper; effectiveness of existing proficiency policy and information about alternatives; a measure of knowledge about language learning and testing options; and access to resources and experts in the ESL and testing arena. Regardless of whether the admission officer's role is to apply it, revise it, or create it, the officer will need a scaffolding of knowledge to support knowledgeable and appropriate use of the policy, guaranteeing that it is sound both as language policy and as admission policy for his/her particular institution.

Language Proficiency and Assessment Objectives

An admission policy specifies criteria which, when met, are supposed to indicate that a student has the English ability to participate in the course of study applied for and that language concerns will not impede academic success. The difficulty is that "proficiency" is in fact a multi-layered and complex set of language behaviors, affected by multiple linguistic and cultural variables, and that therefore tests and assessment of proficiency vary in what they actually test in addition to how well they test it. As in any field, experts such as test providers and language faculty use a variety of language testing and proficiency terms in specific rather than generic ways. Language tests, for example, are designed for specific uses, one of which is to measure proficiency. Other objectives, requiring different kinds of tests, may be to measure achievement in learning specific instructional content, for diagnosis of what needs to be learned, or for placement into the correct level of a language instruction program. Alderson et al. (1987) emphasize appropriate use of proficiency tests this way:

> Proficiency tests measure the test taker's overall ability in English along a broad scale.... [They] may help determine whether the test taker is ready for a job or task requiring English (e.g., working as a government official or entering higher or secondary education).... [They] are sometimes subdivided into subskills or modes of language, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competence, among others. Relative ability in these areas can be determined by a proficiency test.... Test users should avoid using proficiency tests to make strong predictions about a test taker's eventual success in some other endeavor (e.g., an academic program), since language is but one element among many that contribute to success. (p. iv)

At the heart of most proficiency distinctions is the notion that language learning and use is a complex web of skills, behaviors, and personal and cultural factors, and this is exponentially so in the second language context. Within the communication ability profile of a second language user there will be strengths and weaknesses, and these are further tempered by communication setting, communication norms in the student's

native culture, personal feelings such as apprehension, and numerous other personal and sociological factors. Admission officers dealing with language proficiency decisions need to have a working knowledge of language skill and communication ability terms and concepts.

Proficiency descriptors vary depending on linguistic approach. At the risk of oversimplifying the linguistic distinctions, some similarities exist in analyzing how a second language user performs in a given communication context. Language acquisition experts emphasize that knowing the structure and vocabulary of a second language does not necessarily correlate with ability to use that language in actual communication situations. This is captured in distinctions between "competence" and "performance," and is characterized in the conventional lore of admission by the student, for example, who knows grammar inside out and has studied vocabulary (and has a good TOEFL score to prove it) but who cannot use that knowledge to accomplish fluid oral interaction or participate effectively in classroom discussion. Other linguistic approaches break out categories of a second language learner's functional abilities relative to specific communication environments as indicators of proficiency, and again, a given student's actual performance may vary depending on the communication situation.

Skill descriptors refer to categories of language performance. Again, distilling linguistic concepts, active skills essentially include those which require interaction and/or mixed skills in an interaction, such as listening/speaking in conversation, purposive/responsive writing, and listening while taking notes. Passive skills include demonstrations of grammar knowledge, writing with time to revise, and reading. Language skills have subsets of functions; within oral production, for example, pronunciation affects a second language speaker's ability to be understood despite that speaker's ease of expression or fluency. Presentation skills, another subset of the oral language function and one emphasized in American classrooms, invoke other behavioral categories when assessed in second language users.

The tests and assessment processes developed to establish a student's language ability are designed with a language expert's knowledge of the skill and proficiency distinctions. Additionally, language tests and assessment processes have specific applications. Some are designed to establish general proficiency, some test academic language, some test ability to function in real-life communication situations, some screen for placement in language learning programs. The test or assessment process which is used in establishing the baseline for admission to a given institution or to a program or college within that institution must be appropriately selected with these language skill distinctions and various test objectives in mind. And of course, language proficiency tests do not predict academic performance and are not a guarantee of communication performance in an academic setting unless an assessment of that particular skill set is in place, such as is required in some policies requiring testing of oral presentations skills for international teaching assistants.

Other Language-Related Admission Considerations

Admission policy should declare when evidence of English proficiency is required and under what conditions evidence can be waived. Not all international students are non-native English speakers, for example, and not all domestic students are native speakers. American citizens regardless of primary language may not legally be subject to language restrictions. Depending on location and other demographic features of an institution's student population, admission officers may encounter these or other situations with implications on the language proficiency policy.

Additionally, admission policy must specify how to address the proficiency of international students who use International English, dialectal, or non-standard forms of English. Although this varies by institution, generally students who are from a country where English is the, or one of the, official languages and the schools in that country use English as a medium of instruction do not require evidence of English language proficiency. Clear policy doesn't eliminate linguistic reality, however, and practical issues may be unaddressed by this litmus. Comprehensibility of the student's spoken English in an American English environment may be uncertain, for example, and so pronunciation may be an issue after admission. Students from English-medium countries will likely have the same range of English ability that other native users do, from excellent to poor ability in reading and writing, and for this reason campus language policy may refer such

students into the same language support system available or prescribed for native speakers. The international student's advisor should be aware of any language-related issues which may affect the student's academic performance or which may cause faculty to question the proficiency policy.

To determine which countries use English as an official language, or use it as the medium of instruction in public schools, in social discourse, or in commerce, various lists can be used. Some admission offices use world atlases or almanacs, or lists of countries which were at one time governed by Americans or the British. Some institutions waive proficiency test requirements for students from the listed countries but for students from countries where strongly dialectal forms of English are used still require verification of some sort that the student's language performance will not hinder academic performance. This verification may be an on-arrival interview or writing test, or letters of reference from the student's English-medium school, for example.

When an applicant clearly meets or exceeds the required score or criteria, language proficiency is seldom addressed further in the admission process; the student is admitted to a full-time course of study. An application from a student who does not meet the criteria or who meets the criteria marginally can be handled in various ways depending on the services and programs available on the campus. Several of these options (referral to an IEP, conditional admission, and co-enrollment) are discussed later.

Proficiency Tools and Processes

Admission policies can employ any of several tools, or combine several in a number of ways, to establish that an international applicant has sufficient English language proficiency to undertake a full course of study in the major area at the level requested. One tool may be used, establishing a single unambiguous criteria. For example, a policy may establish a specific TOEFL cut-off score for unconditional enrollment. Often several tools are incorporated into a policy, with the combination designed to account for the ways proficiency is known to vary among language skill categories. A policy may require several sources of proficiency evidence forming an aggregate requirement, for example, a test for grammar, reading, and passive listening (TOEFL); a test for writing skills (TWE); and an assessment for listening and speaking in interactive situations (on-arrival oral interview).

Alternatively, a proficiency policy may be configured to require that students meet any one of several equally acceptable options. As examples, students may be given the option of 1) a TOEFL score, 2) a MELAB score, or 3) evidence of completion of an intensive English program's highest level. In this case, the admission officer will be seeking some correlation of these various proficiency scores or performance indicators. The following from the University of Oklahoma's admission statement provides options, for example:

> **Information for Prospective Students from Abroad: English Proficiency Requirements**
>
> All applicants for whom English is a second language must present evidence of proficiency in the English language in one of the following ways:
>
> 1. An official TOEFL score of 550 or higher sent directly from the Educational Testing Service. Scores over two years old by the beginning of the term you wish to enter are not acceptable unless you have been attending school in the United States since the test date. Some graduate programs require a score higher than 550. Check with the individual department for more specific information. . . .
> 2. Secondary school work in the United States, including completion of the high school curricular requirements required for freshman admission
> 3. Successful completion of 24 semester hours of college-level coursework or a bachelor's degree or higher degree from an accredited college in the United States or a country where English is the native language
> 4. Attendance at the University's Center for English as a Second Language (C.E.S.L.) until a satisfactory level of English proficiency (determined by Institutional TOEFL's and classroom assessment) is achieved. For programs that require a 550 TOEFL only, English proficiency can be established by submitting a TOEFL score of at least 500 and then satisfactorily completing 12 weeks in C.E.S.L. language training prior to beginning regular classes. No college credit is awarded for C.E.S.L. study.
>
> http://www.ou.edu/adrec/stuabrd.htm

The proficiency tools and typical admission options are these, and more detailed discussion of each follows:

- standardized language proficiency tests
- other assessments and combinations
- IEP levels
- conditional admission and co-enrollment

Standardized language proficiency tests. The most commonly used tool in university and college admission is an internationally available test which provides a standardized proficiency test score through a secure reporting mechanism. In the United States, the Educational Testing Service's Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) is the most widely used test, whether in its computer-adaptive CBT form or as the pencil-and-paper test, and several other well-known standardized tests such as the MELAB, the Cambridge Exam Series and IELTS, though less widely available, are appropriate for academic language assessment. Other standardized tests increasingly appearing in language proficiency policies are the College Board's APIEL and the TOEIC. Six test suites are described later in the chapter, including the provider's statement of test objectives and target population, structure, availability and cost, and scoring system.

In selecting or reviewing the use of a test on which to base a language proficiency policy, the admission office should take into consideration a variety of factors:

- institutional goals for undergraduate and graduate international students and for the departments and programs for which students are being considered if those goals vary from overall institutional goals.
- availability on campus of language support resources such as IEPs, ESL courses, writing labs, and ITA teaching centers which can be employed to support the testing policy.
- student concerns, including the cost of the test, the frequency of test dates, the location of testing centers, and the format (computer-adaptive, pencil-and-paper, oral interview) of the test.
- admission needs, including validity/reliability of the test, security of the test and score reports, reporting speed, test objectives that match with the skills expected in student language performance, skill breakout tests if needed, and the type of English tested (academic, workplace, conversational).

Establishing rationale for and setting score ranges. The score range or cut-off score for unconditional admission can be established in several ways. At the out-set, it is important to thoroughly review the test provider's score user's manual and the guidelines it provides. Beyond numerical scoring scales, the user's manual generally contains a discussion of what the scores can be construed to mean in terms of practical communication performance relative to the test's target population.

The *TOEFL Score User Guide* (1999), for example, provides an extensive discussion of use of TOEFL test scores. This discussion is prefaced with a caution:

> The TOEFL test is a measure of general English proficiency. It is not a test of academic aptitude or of subject matter competence; nor is it a direct test of English speaking ability. TOEFL test scores can help determine whether an applicant has attained sufficient proficiency in English to study at a college or a university. However, even applicants who achieve high TOEFL scores may not succeed in a given program of study if they are not broadly prepared for academic work. Therefore, the admissibility of non-native English speakers depends not only on their levels of English proficiency but also on other factors, such as their academic records, the schools they have attended, their fields of study, their prospective programs of study, and their motivations. (p. 21, also available on-line at http://www.toefl.org/appuseofscr.html)

A thorough discussion about how to use the scores continues, and includes, for example, these guidelines among others:

> Do not use rigid cut-scores to evaluate applicants' performance on the TOEFL test.... Good practice includes looking at additional evidence of language proficiency (e.g., use of local tests, interviews) for applicants who score near the cut-score ranges.... Take TOEFL section scores, as well as total scores, into account. (p. 23)

In establishing a score range or cut-off score, the admission officer may have consulted ESL professionals for a practical view of what a test's scores reveal and what they don't. Some institutions have established the minimum proficiency score by surveying institutions with similar international student populations and institutional goals. As the institution applies the proficiency policy and gets feedback from students, their advisers, and faculty, the initial score range may be adjusted or refined. Policy change may also be triggered by the test provider; score ranges are recalibrated when the test is revised or for other reasons. As previously mentioned, the undergraduate score cut-off typically is uniform across disciplines, while the required score for graduate admission varies depending on the discipline. Higher scores are generally required in language intensive disciplines such as liberal arts, humanities, social sciences, law and business; disciplines which communicate using universal symbols, formulas, and graphic models such as science, technology, engineering, and math, may require a lower language proficiency score.

Principal standardized tests and their use. The following list provides a capsule view of six standardized test groups. Each entry includes a description of the test or test suite, test objectives, structure, availability and cost, scoring and reporting system, and contact information. Test providers' web sites are storehouses of regularly updated information about all aspects of the test and generally include downloadable student bulletins and score user's manuals. Admission officers whose institutions use standardized tests in the proficiency policy are strongly advised to visit the test's web site and review the rich trove of information there. Additionally, it is very useful to review the user information for other listed tests; an overview of several providers' materials is a short course in types of tests, testing nomenclature, and proficiency distinctions. The test descriptions below, including any comment on acceptable scores, are adapted from the test providers' statements at the referenced web sites. Again, these are overviews only; advisers are strongly advised to collect information from test providers.

TEST PROVIDER/TEST(S)	COST/AVAILABILITY
Educational Testing Service (ETS) tests www.ets.org	
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) www.toefl.org The TOEFL evaluates English proficiency in non-native-English users. It was developed to measure proficiency for international students who want to study at U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities, and is now used in a somewhat wider range of proficiency situations as well. The TOEFL is a general proficiency test with an academic focus.	
TOEFL: Computer-Based Test (CBT) The computer adaptive CBT TOEFL has three sections: Listening, Structure and Writing, and Reading. The Structure and Writing section includes a structure (grammar) test and a writing (essay) test, each of which are equally weighted in the sectional score. The score report indicates a score for each section and in addition shows an essay rating. Test scores range from 0 – 300. The test takes approximately four hours.	Cost: $100–$125 Available worldwide 12 times per year. Available at special test centers six times per year.
TOEFL: Supplemental Pencil-and-Paper Test In selected locations the pencil-and-paper format TOEFL is available. This TOEFL has three sections: Listening Comprehension, Structure and Written Expression, and Reading Comprehension. The test takes approximately two hours. Total scores range from 200 – 677. (Students may also take the Test of Written English and/or the Test of Spoken English at the same time. See below.)	Cost: $75–$80 Available at selected locations 12 times a year. Available at selected special test centers six times per year.
Test of Written English (TWE) Students are required to take the Test of Written English on the same day they take the TOEFL test; it is not possible to take the TWE separately. The test takes 30 minutes, during which students write an essay on one topic, which is printed in the test book. Topics are appropriate for international students and require no specialized knowledge of any given subject matter. Each essay is read and evaluated by at least two qualified raters. Scores are reported on a six-point scale 1–6. TWE scores are not incorporated into the total TOEFL score, but the separate TWE score is reported on the TOEFL score report. 6.0 demonstrates clear competence in writing; 5.5 and 5.0 demonstrate competence in writing; 4.5 and 4.0 demonstrate minimum competence.	Cost: No additional fee Available five times per year at TOEFL Supplemental Pencil-and-Paper administrations.
Test of Spoken English (TSE) The TSE is designed to evaluate the speaker's ability to communicate in spoken English. It is often required for students who are applying to be international teaching assistants. Test-takers make taped responses to written and oral questions. The test takes 20 minutes. TSE responses are evaluated by two trained evaluators who render a score on a five-point scale. TSE scores are reported separately from other TOEFL results.	Cost: $125 Availability: Twelve times per year on the same test dates and at the same test locations as TOEFL.

TEST PROVIDER/TEST(S)	COST/AVAILABILITY
Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) http://www.toefl.org/educator/edspeak.html SPEAK provides institutions with a valid and reliable instrument for assessing English speaking proficiency in non-native speakers. Tests are available to institutions in kits and can be administered and scored by the institutions. The test uses a tape recorder and test book. Audio and visual prompts present 12 contextualized language tasks that are designed to elicit specific language functions. The kits also contain rater training materials. The SPEAK Flyer, available from the web site, provides complete information. SPEAK may be used as part of an ITA oral proficiency assessment.	Cost: $100 per set of 30 test booklets and materials Availability: SPEAK is an institutional testing kit
Chauncey Group International Ltd., wholly owned subsidiary of ETS	
Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) www.toeic.com The TOEIC is a test of everyday English as it is used in the business world and daily interaction, emphasizing listening and reading comprehension. It measures the type of English that is found in the workplace but it does not require specialized knowledge or vocabulary. The TOEIC is a paper-and-pencil test. It consists of 200 questions divided into two sections. While the test was designed for companies making personnel decisions and for language training programs, an increasing number of universities are accepting TOEIC scores as evidence of proficiency in the admission process. The TOEIC takes two hours, and is a paper-and-pencil, multiple-choice test that consists of 200 questions divided into two sections: listening and reading. Scores range from 10 – 990. 805 – 990 High Advanced; 655 – 804 Advanced; 555 – 654 High Intermediate.	Cost: Fees vary by country Availability: Test centers worldwide
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) www.ceii.org	
Cambridge Main Suite http://www.ceii.org/cambridge.htm The Cambridge EFL exams are run by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). The exams are linked to an international system of levels for assessing European languages. Cambridge EFL exams can be taken by anyone whose first language is not English and are suitable for all nationalities regardless of first language or cultural background, and for almost any age. The range of exams includes specialist examinations in Business English and English for Academic Purposes, and a suite of certificates and diplomas for language teachers. The most typical exams which appear in U.S. admission applications are these: *First Certificate in English (FCE)* *Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)* *Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)* The exams cover four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing —with the overall objective of assessing ability to communicate effectively in English. Each test includes tasks which assess candidates' ability to use English and to make practical use of the language in a variety of contexts. The tests	Cost: Fees vary by country Availability: 210 test centers worldwide

TEST PROVIDER/TEST(S)	COST/AVAILABILITY

take approximately six hours. Test results are reported as passing (grades A, B, C) or failing (grades D, E). Each certificate corresponds to a level of the five-level scale established by the Association of Language Testers in Europe. The FCE corresponds to Level 3, the CPE corresponds to Level 4, and the CAE corresponds to Level 5. Universities typically accept the certificates awarded to passing students at Levels 4 (the CPE) and 5 (the CAE) as evidence of an adequate standard of English for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
www.ielts.org
IELTS assesses readiness to study or train in an English-medium environment. It tests international English. All students take Listening and Speaking Modules. For Reading and Writing, students choose either Academic or General Training Modules. The test takes about three hours. All modules are scored individually, as well as overall, on a nine-band scale which provides a profile of ability:
6.5 Probably Acceptable for linguistically less demanding academic courses,
7.0 – 9.0 Acceptable for linguistically less demanding academic courses,
7.0 Probably Acceptable for linguistically demanding academic courses,
7.5 – 9.0 Acceptable for linguistically demanding academic courses.

Cost: $100–$130 depending on location
Availability: 210 test centers worldwide

University of Michigan English Language Institute Testing and Certification Division
http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/testing.html

The ELI-UM has developed several tests which assess ESL for admission purposes. Three of these are commonly used in some aspect of ESL testing. While each of these tests is sometimes referred to as the "Michigan" test, they are different tests with different uses.

Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB)
The MELAB is designed to measure proficiency to support admission decisions to U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities. It is a secure test administered at established testing centers. It is a four-part test—Composition, Listening, and Grammar/Cloze/Vocabulary/Reading, and an optional Speaking test. The test takes approximately 2 1/2 hours. Scores are reported for each section and as a Final Score. Final Scores range from 33–99. Speaking is rated from –1 to +4.
Acceptance: Final Score of 80–85 with all component scores of 75 or better.

Cost: $40–$60, $15 for optional Speaking test
Availability: In most U.S. states, Canadian provinces, and Bhutan, Iran, and Libya.
Test dates, except at the University of Michigan, vary.

Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP)
The MTELP is a retired component of a no-longer-used proficiency test battery. It is sold for use by intensive English programs and other institutions for group administration for in-house proficiency testing. While the proficiency assessment is valid in itself, ELI-UM emphasizes that the tests are not secure and urges that admission officers accept MTELP scores only when there is close knowledge of the administering institution and supplemental verification of the student's proficiency.

English Placement Test (EPT)
The EPT is a placement test developed to group beginning, intermediate, and advanced students into ability levels for intensive English programs. It is not a broad test of general language proficiency.

TEST PROVIDER/TEST(S)	COST/AVAILABILITY
College Board tests http://www.collegeboard.org	
Advanced Placement International English Language (APIEL) http://www.collegeboard.org/ap/international-english-language/index.html or http://www.collegeboard.org, search term APIEL In 1995 the College Board developed an Advanced Placement course and exam in International English Language. The acronym APIEL applies to the course and its exam. All upper-level English courses in the APIEL series build upon students' previous experience in learning English over the course of several years, and all have the goal of helping students develop reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills to function successfully in an English-speaking environment. The exam requires students to demonstrate good command of English grammar and vocabulary as well as the four skills, particularly in academic contexts. The test is four parts, each weighed equally in the grade. The test is approximately three hours long. Speaking is tested through tape-recorded responses. APIEL was administered to approximately 6,000 examinees in year 2000. APIEL is scored 1 (no recommendation), 2 (possibly qualified), 3 (qualified), 4 (well qualified), and 5 (extremely well qualified).	Cost: Varies by country Availability: See www.collegeboard.org/ap/students/exam/index.html or www.collegeboard.org/ap/students/apiel/index.html
English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) The ELPT is one of the SAT II Subject Tests. College Board reports in a Memorandum for Directors of Admission that ELPT is designed for and can be used to determine whether ESL applicants are prepared for undergraduate college-level work. ELPT consists of two subtests measuring reading and listening skills. Five scores are reported for each student, including reading and listening proficiency descriptions, reading and listening subscores on a 1–50 scale, and a total score on a 901–999 scale. Data showing ELPTconcordance with TOEFL is being collected. Preliminary data shows a total ELPT score of 941 equating with TOEFL 470, ELPT 950 with TOEFL 503, and ELPT 972 with TOEFL 577.	Cost: $20 Availability: At designated domestic SAT test sites on the November test date; at selected overseas centers in 2001; school-based administrations each April
Other College Board tests with descriptions available at http://www.collegeboard.org	
English Language Assessment System for Hispanics (ELASH) Levels of English Proficiency (LOEP)	
American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language (ACTFL) http://www.actfl.org	
The ACTFL Certified Testing Program is a comprehensive program for assessment training, tester certification, and proficiency testing. The Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is one component of this program. The OPI is a standardized method of measuring how well a person speaks a language by comparing his or her performance of specific language tasks with the criteria outlined in the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines—Speaking (Revised 1999)*. The OPI measures consistent functional ability by eliciting a ratable sample of speech which is rated by two certified testers. Ten proficiency levels are possible, from Novice Low to Superior. The OPI may be required to verify the oral functional proficiency of ITAs.	Cost: $129 Availability: Schedule through the ACTFL Testing Office

TEST PROVIDER/TEST(S)	COST/AVAILABILITY

Other tests which may be considered when assessing evidence of some aspect of English language proficiency are listed below, with contact information for each. Each test has strengths and weaknesses, and careful review of the test objectives, scoring, and reporting of any test being considered must be emphasized.

Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees (CanTEST)
Contact: *ils-sli@uottawa.ca*

Carleton Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL)
Contact: http://www.carleton.ca/slals/cael.htm

PhonePass
Contact: http://www.ordinate.com

Other Test Processes

Standardized test scores are not the only, or in some cases the best, method of determining proficiency. Other assessment processes may be employed or accepted to establish proficiency for a variety of reasons. For example, the required standardized test may not be available or affordable to a student, or campus ESL experts may lack faith in the usefulness of standardized test scores and may recommend face-to-face assessments such as oral interviews or prefer a test developed in-house. Admission officers may have concerns about the security of test administration or score reporting. Additionally, they may want to have an option when test scores don't seem to match student's communication performance or when test scores are more than two years old.

Using other assessment tools or combinations of tools has advantages in determining a student's functional language ability, and providing options is often important in meeting student needs, but the disadvantages must also be weighed when making a decision about what options to include in proficiency policy. When proficiency determinations are delayed until arrival, for example, students lack the certainty of admission and length and cost of their programs, particularly if additional non-credit language study is prescribed. Tests developed in-house, or testing processes carried out by shifting groups of examiners may introduce questions of test validity and reliability, and applicants will express concerns about what they are expected to know.

Test-based assessment policies alternative to requiring only a standardized English proficiency test score or other specific action such as completion of an IEP submitted in advance of acceptance come in a variety of configurations. Policies having a standardized language test score as its centerpiece may 1) use standardized test scores plus other evaluative instruments such as an on-arrival oral interview or 2) use standardized test scores plus a requirement for specified additional language study within a specified period of time. On-arrival testing may be used to make a primary assessment but is more commonly used to confirm or supplement previously-submitted test scores. The on-arrival test may be an institutional version of a standardized test, or could be a test developed in-house. In-house tests are generally developed and administered by the institution's ESL professionals in a testing center, IEP, or language department. The test components typically include reading, writing, and grammar assessments, often include an oral interview, and may include English-for-special-purposes tests for content or degree areas. An additional option is to accept a non-proficiency standardized test score such as the SAT verbal or the verbal section of the GRE or GMAT as evidence that the student can function at a sufficient level of English. For example, these are the benchmark scores, considered equivalent, for meeting English proficiency at the University of Washington:

TOEFL (Paper-based)	580
TOEFL (CBT)	237
MELAB	90
SAT Verbal	490

As more international students avail themselves of English study options from an early age at the burgeoning number of in-country English programs and as more U.S. institutions actively recruit international students through visits to their home countries, alternative language screening and assessment is increasing. Though not a frequent approach, institutions with the capability of sending qualified personnel to meet prospective students in their home countries may do in-country testing and interviews of prospective students. Schools with foreign branches or reliable foreign university partners may choose to rely on screening or testing procedures administered in those institutions. Graduate applicants who are being considered for (or have already been hired as) international teaching assistants may be asked to submit video-taped presentations to verify oral production and classroom presentation skills. The advantages of using any such alternatives must be weighed against disadvantages, which can include lack of secure, valid, and reliable results.

Intensive English Program Study

Admission professionals can benefit from engaging IEPs as partners in several ways. As ESL experts, personnel in a quality IEP will be able to provide up-to-date testing information. They also have a good working knowledge of proficiency-related conventional wisdom and issues, including culture/language-specific proficiency factors. Having IEP partners also expands options for responding to applicants, and can be a source of applications as well. Many colleges and universities have an IEP on campus, sometimes administered by the university and sometimes administered by a proprietary language school. The university-administered program may be in an academic department such as the English department, or in a self-support unit, such as continuing education. In some cases, an IEP is at an off-campus ("stand-alone," or private) location or on the campus of another university or college. A variety of relationships exist between IEPs and universities, both public and private. Some have closely articulated cross-support admission and proficiency systems, some are controlled by campus policy, some by contract. Acceptance of an IEP level has recruitment and enrollment benefits to both the admitting school and the IEP, and relationships are often established for these reasons.

A sizable minority of U.S. colleges and universities now accept completion of an IEP, whether their own or a pre-screened, external program, in lieu of a TOEFL or other standardized test score. The following statement from the University of Oklahoma's Graduate College, for example, shows this option:

> Proficiency can be demonstrated through the following methods:
> - the applicant has successfully completed at least 24 hours from an accredited college or university in which English is the native language followed by at least 500 on the TOEFL or 173 on the computer-based TOEFL; or
> - the applicant has successfully completed immediately prior to admission a minimum of 12 weeks of study at an approved English language center or program operated by an institution of higher learning or a private school approved by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; or
> - the applicant presents at least a 550 TOEFL, or a 213 score on the computer-based TOEFL.
>
> http://gradweb.ou.edu/docs/information/gcbulletin/admission/intladmiss.html

Another approach to utilizing an IEP to address language proficiency and related academic preparation is expressed in this statement from the University of Northern Iowa:

> UNI offers a full-time language program that emphasizes practical command of spoken and written English. International students who have completed secondary school and have a TOEFL score of 380 or its equivalent are admissible to the language program. Admission to CIEP [UNI's Culture and Intensive English Program] does not guarantee admission to university academic programs. However, provisional academic

admission is available to those applicants who meet all of the requirements except for language and agree to enroll in CIEP to improve their fluency in English and thus prepare for academic studies.
http://www.uni.edu/intladm/ciep.html

Relative to language proficiency and real communicative ability in the classroom, there is a fair amount of anecdotal and program-specific research support for admitting students who have already been in the U.S. studying at an IEP before attending the university or college. Students who have been in such programs tend to have gained cultural perspective and have grown accustomed to the nature of the informal, spoken English they will be encountering on campus and in their classes. In IEPs that focus on academic English and academic preparedness, the value of IEP attendance may be even greater to a student. Such students typically will have had instruction and practice with focused language skills such as academic reading, writing research papers, giving oral presentations, and note-taking, as well as general study skills. The questions for admission officers considering this option are which IEPs to accept levels from and how to reconcile the IEP level with other components of the proficiency policy.

In deciding to accept an IEP level as evidence of proficiency, the admission officer may want to consider a number of factors. Does the IEP provide English for academic preparation as well as communicative competence? Has the IEP undergone an accreditation process or hold another quality indicator which has addressed teacher qualifications and curricular soundness? How have students already attending the university and who had attended the IEP performing?

Conditional Admission and Co-Enrollment

Admission policy may include conditional admission as an option, rather than reject the application, when an international applicant meets all admission criteria except language proficiency. This process usually includes a response to the applicant indicating that the student will be accepted for enrollment when the language proficiency requirement is met and establishing how the student can meet the requirement. In its simplest form, students may be admitted conditionally based on presentation of a specified standardized test score within a specified period of time and the student is left to accomplish this in any way he/she prefers. Admission may be conditional until arrival testing confirms adequate proficiency, either as a supplement to proficiency evidence supplied with the application or as the primary proficiency criteria. Students may be given the option to successfully complete specified levels or sessions in an IEP in lieu of presenting a standardized test score, based on an articulation with an IEP. Conditional admission is sometimes granted with the provision that the student attend specified levels of an IEP and then present an institutional standardized test score from the IEP. Other configurations are also possible.

Some schools have developed acceptance practices which provide for co-enrollment, granting admission but limiting the number, level, and subject area of credit courses a student may take, and prescribing language support courses in general English or courses for specific skill areas. For example, because it is typically accepted that a lower level of English proficiency and a lower level of interactive communication ability is needed for math- and science-based courses than for humanities and social sciences courses, typical enrollment policies for students admitted with provisions may include permission to enroll in a half-load of science or technology courses while completing communication skills or academic preparation courses.

In all of these situations, it is important to provide the student with clear statements about the possible outcomes of the proficiency process and the affect on his/her overall academic program. Students will want to know how much time they will have to spend in an IEP, supplemental or non-credit language courses if recommended or required, and what it will cost. They will want to know how many credit courses can be taken and how they fit into the degree program. And they will want to know what happens if the required language proficiency criteria are not ultimately met for some reason.

In cases of conditional admission contingent on language school or IEP attendance, the IEP will admit the student and issue the I-20. However, in these cases the university admission office may be asked by

students to provide some verification of conditional admission that can be submitted to the visa officer for consideration during the visa application process, so the admission office will need to consider appropriate policy relative to immigration regulations and issuance of I-20s. INS regulations make it clear that the admission office cannot issue an I-20 until all admission criteria are met and that a "conditional I-20" is not acceptable. The Immigration and Naturalization Service Operations Instructions specifying this follows:

> OPERATIONS INSTRUCTIONS: OI 214 Nonimmigrant classes.
> (4) Issuance of provisional Forms I-20. The provisional issuance of Forms I-20 is a violation of 8 CFR 214.3(k). According to that regulation, a designated school official may not issue a Form I-20 until the appropriate school authority has determined that the prospective student's qualifications meet all standards for admission at the school which has accepted the prospective student for enrollment in a full course of study. http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/cgi-bin/folioisa.dll/lawbooks.nfo/query=provisional+admission/doc/{@50558}/words=4?

The student may be issued an I-20 for the language training program, indicating language training as the academic objective, and some institutions then issue an accompanying letter indicating conditional admission to the university upon completion of the proficiency requirement. Another regulatory concern is that it is also necessary to confirm, in cases of admission to co-enrollment in credit bearing and non-credit bearing courses, or in credit bearing courses and IEP courses measured by clock rather than credit hours, that a student is enrolled in a full course of study in order for the student to maintain status. (See Chapter 11—Admitting International Students: The Student Visa.)

Language Proficiency and International Teaching Assistants

A particular set of language proficiency concerns revolve around the communication and teaching abilities of graduate international teaching assistants (ITAs). There are numerous factors and stakeholders in the ITA arena. A department may require ITAs as part of a teaching load solution, and ITAs may be technical or content specialists. The international student is likely to be relying on the financial support package that a teaching assistantship provides. The satisfaction of the university students in the ITA's class must also be considered. Even legislators raise issues. As Hoekje and Linnell (1994) point out, however, the essential underlying issue of how to assess ITA language proficiency, is unsettled:

> One response to the increased numbers of international faculty and graduate teaching assistants (TAs) in U.S. universities in recent years has been a legislative focus on English language requirements for non-native-English-speaking (NNS) instructors of undergraduate students. To date, at least 10 states have drafted or passed legislation regarding such English language proficiency requirements.... From a theoretical standpoint, we see most predominantly the problem of the evaluation of language proficiency itself.... We see as a major issue the fact that, as a field, we have not articulated the theoretical grounds on which to evaluate the merit of assessment instruments as they are used in NNS TA testing. (p. 103)

Nonetheless, because ITAs have responsibilities to students of their own that go far beyond their own academic success, admission policies should address the language proficiency of ITAs in a substantive way.

Hoekje and Linnell (1994) and Constantinides (1997) emphasize that ITAs must be assessed for active communication skills including clarity of pronunciation and ability to interact in the type of discourse that occurs in American classrooms. Additionally, the adequacy of teaching and presentation skills must be assessed, including the ITA's ability to communicate in culturally appropriate ways in the classroom or lab setting to which he or she is assigned. Clearly, a single standardized test score or short oral interview is not sufficient to determine these abilities.

Proficiency assessment policy for the broader nature of language requirements for ITA's typically include the following features:

- A pre-arrival aggregate standardized test score which shows unqualified language proficiency, such as a 580–600 TOEFL.
- A pre-arrival speaking test to establish essential oral preparedness, such as TSE or submission of a videotaped oral presentation or classrooom lesson.
- On-arrival testing focusing on oral production and communicative competence, such as a SPEAK test, the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview, extensive oral interview, or sample lesson delivery.

Additionally, the admission officer will want to confirm that ITA training and instructional support programs are available for further ITA teaching development, including further language practice. In developing and applying language proficiency policy to ITAs, admission officers often rely heavily on, even defer to, campus units with expertise in ESL and language assessment. The campus testing center, instructional support center, IEP, English department, or graduate assistant labs are invaluable partners in ITA admission processes.

Two selections from the University of North Texas' *Teaching Assistantship/Teaching Fellowship Handbook (Chapter Seven: University Policies)* provide illustrations of the procedures related to ITA recruitment and to language proficiency and teaching development.

4. Language competencies for all non-native speakers of English who seek teaching assistantships or teaching fellowships must be assured. This shall be given careful consideration at the time of their selection and appointment.

a) International students should be selected as TF/TAs only after having been in residence one long semester or both summer sessions. Exceptions may be made only after approval of the dean of the college and the office of the provost and vice president for academic affairs. If exceptions are made, the following procedures should be adhered to:

1) Telephone contact should be made by the department (preferably with prior warning to the student) to obtain an indication of the student's ability to communicate in English.

2) The letter of appointment shall contain a provision that the student, upon arrival on campus, must demonstrate a facility with spoken English sufficient to function in the classroom; otherwise the letter of commitment is void. (English proficiency will be determined by the [UNT] Intensive English Language Institute).

3) Close supervision shall be conducted by the faculty coordinator within the department during the first several weeks of the class to ensure that communication with the classroom situation is acceptable.

b) Language competencies and communication skills of all teaching fellows/teaching assistants both foreign and American, shall be of primary concern to the departments and should be carefully monitored and supervised by the coordinator or teaching fellows and teaching assistants within each department. Guidelines for Recruitment and Selection of Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants 15.1.27, www.unt.edu/planning/UNT_Policy/volume3/15_1_27.html

7. The Intensive English Language Institute [UNT's IEP] will continue to offer the International TA/TF Program. This program includes screening in speaking skills, the communication skills course, and an evaluation of teaching skills by a panel. The core of the program is the communication skills course, a free, non-credit course offered each term for non-native English-speaking students who seek teaching assistantships or fellowships. All non-native English-speaking students must be certified before they may be assigned teaching responsibilities. The final evaluation panel for each student consists of representatives from his/her department, IELI and ITA program staff. Decisions regarding assignment of teaching responsibilities are made by the departments; the certification of language and communication competence through the ITA program is provided as a service to the university, the departments, and the students. Guidelines for Orientation, Supervision, and Evaluation of Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants 15.1.28, http://www.unt.edu/vpaa/TAIF

In illustration of an actual testing procedure, the following excerpts from The University of South Carolina's "International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Assessment, Explanation of Assessment Tool" provide an excellent example of thorough ITA language assessment. The ITA assessment is conducted by USC's English Programs for Internationals, as a component of the Instructional Development Project, a week-long orientation and training event for new TAs.

> The University of South Carolina's International Teaching Assistant (ITA) Assessment is based on the linguistic theory of communicative competence. For the purposes of this assessment, communicative competence has been divided into seven categories, explained below.
>
> The categories have been weighted (please refer to percentage following each category) according to EPI's effective USC ITA assessment since 1990 and experience in successful teaching of English-as-a-second-language since 1979. The greatest weight (50 percent) is given to psychomotor competence (pronunciation), which has been the chief barrier to ITAs' interacting effectively with undergraduates.

In addition to assessment of Psychomotor Competence (Pronunciation, weighted at 50 percent), Grammatical Competence (10 percent), and Lexical/Semantic Competence (10 percent), ITAs are assessed for other pertinent communicative behaviors and strategies.

> *Strategic Competence (10 percent):* This category primarily considers overall fluency, particularly during the spontaneous linguistic performance occasioned by responses to questions from the "class." We are looking for the ability to restate an explanation or definition in other linguistic forms or frames, including grammar and vocabulary. Techniques of repairing an explanation or utterance might also indicate strategic competence. Such techniques may occur during the microlesson itself. This competence category reveals itself when the ITA is not reading to the audience.
>
> *Discourse Competence (10 percent):* In this category we are considering global organization (coherence) and rhetoric appropriate to U.S. academic instructional contexts. We are looking for a clear statement of the topic of the microlesson, somewhere near the beginning of the lesson, the use of relevant and comprehensible examples and facts for the elaboration of the lesson, and a conclusion statement. (The conclusion statement is the least important because the ITA may run out of time.) We are also considering inter-sentential (sentence-to-sentence) cohesion, i.e., the use of appropriate and accurate discourse markers or transitional devices.
>
> *Sociolinguistic Competence (5 percent):* In this category, we are including the concept of culture as a natural and necessary part of language. We are considering the evidence of cross-cultural awareness, e.g., acknowledging students' presence (use of names might be an example), showing U.S.-style respect for students (such comments as "That's a good question" and/or restating the question so that all can hear might be examples), and demonstrating an attempt at U.S.-style teacher-student interaction, e.g., encouraging or enabling student participation.
>
> *Pragmatic Competence (5 percent):* In this category we are considering paralinguistic behaviors, i.e., body language and effective use of communicative aids, i.e., board work, overheads, and other visual devices used to support effective oral communication in academic settings. With regard to body language, we are looking for U.S.-style eye contact and other appropriate body language, including gestures. In-house document provided by Alexandra Rowe, Director, USC English Programs for Internationals.

Clearly, assessment of ITA language proficiency must be addressed carefully by knowledgeable language professionals, and best practice relative to admission includes clarifying these proficiency requirements to the student and hiring departments prior to admission.

Selected Bibliography

Alderson, J. C., Krahnke K. J., & Stansfield, C. W. (Eds.) (1987). *Reviews of English language proficiency tests*. Washington, D. C.: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Though now essentially out-of-date due to substantial testing developments since its publication, if this volume is on the shelf in the admission office or at the campus IEP, it bears scanning. It provides orientation to and some historical perspective on the world of language learning and proficiency testing. Many of the 49 tests reviewed are still in use.

Douglas, D. (Ed.) (1990). *English language testing in U.S. colleges and universities*. Washington, D.C.: National Association for Foreign Student Affairs.

Intended for those with international students on U.S. campuses who need to better understand testing practices and uses. This volume includes chapters focused on proficiency testing in the admission process. Advice on specific tests is dated.

Constantinides, J. C. (1997). International teaching assistant training principles for the language program administrator. In *A handbook for language program administrators*. M. A. Christison & F. L. Stoller, (Eds.) Burlingame, CA: Alta Book Center Publishers.

States five principles critical to training ITAs, emphasizing the additional language and teaching training ITAs need beyond testable English proficiency. Includes an annotated bibliography of books, articles, textbooks, and research reports on ITAs. Highly recommended.

Hoekje, B. & Linnell, K. (1994). "Authenticity" in language testing: Evaluating spoken language tests for international teaching assistants. *TESOL Quarterly* 28(1), 103–126.

CHAPTER 11

Admitting International Students: The Student Visa

Introduction

This chapter attempts to guide the admission officer through some basic immigration procedures as they relate to the process of admitting new students. It explains some key responsibilities of the Designated School Official (DSO) and Responsible Officer (RO), as well as attempts to summarize the central characteristics of F, M, and J statuses and the procedures that govern them. This section is not a guide to immigration rules and regulations; however, the admission officer who also wears the hat of International Student Adviser should look to other sources for guidance on the day-to-day concerns of DSOs/ROs and international students.

Especially helpful on the full range of immigration regulations is NAFSA's *Adviser's Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars,* 2000 edition. This manual, which is paraphrased frequently in this chapter, interprets regulations found in the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), *Title 8 Aliens and Nationality* or *Title 22 Foreign Relations* (Government Printing Office, with subsequent revisions via the *Federal Register*) and expands them by drawing upon internal U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) guidelines known as Operation Instructions (OIs), as well as cables for the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and their Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM). The 8CFR, 22CFR, and the NAFSA *Adviser's Manual* also are among the most important sources for explaining the procedures that admission officers and DSOs/ROs must follow in carrying out their duties regarding the admission of international students. The *Manual's* reference to INS Operation Instructions is especially useful because the OIs specify the record keeping and reporting duties incumbent on schools and their DSOs.

As helpful as these resources are, one must remember that statements in manuals or statements by INS or DOS officials at conferences or in writing, or e-mail statements by knowledgeable colleagues on listservs are still only interpretations based on either the originating federal immigration statute—the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 (often referred to as the '*statute*') and its subsequent revisions—or the regulations that describe how the statute will be implemented. (Technically, the DOS's Foreign Affairs Manual or INS' Operation Instructions are interpretations as well, but they are interpretations by the officials who adjudicate cases and issue visas for international students and visitors!)

In dealing with international students and exchange programs, as mentioned above, these regulations are found primarily in Titles 8 and 22 of the *Code of Federal Regulations.* Thus, when questions of policy and procedure arise, the admission official should certainly be familiar with the best tools for seeking out the current interpretations of the statute and regulations, but the official should also be ready to go to the relevant regulations, read them, and form his or her own conclusions. The relevant hyperlinks from the INS and DOS web site for the main body of relevant regulations are included in the Resources section near the end of this chapter.

Admitting International Students: The School and Its Officials

Institutional Approval

Colleges and universities must obtain approval from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to enroll nonimmigrant students (8 CFR 214.3). Procedures for seeking this approval are discussed in the NAFSA *Adviser's Manual,* 2000 edition, section. 3.2. Approval to admit F-1 and M-1 students depends on compliance with INS regulations and may be withdrawn under certain circumstances after a formal review process (8 CFR 214.4).

The DSO

An institution's authority to enroll F-1 and M-1 students is expressed through the action of the designated school official (DSO), who has important responsibilities. An institution may have only five DSOs at one time, regardless of its size, although multicampus institutions may designate up to five DSOs at each campus. The DSO must be "a regularly employed member of the school administration whose office is located at the school" and may not be primarily a recruiter of international students. It is the designated school official who may sign Forms I-20A-B, I-20M-N, I-538, and other school-based documents relating to F and M students.

The regulations in 8 CFR 214.3 specify that in requesting permission to issue I-20s, the institution promises that the DSO will be adequately trained to perform the functions of a DSO. Further, in signing the INS form I-17A, which the admission official signs to become a DSO, the admission official is agreeing that he or she has read the relevant regulations concerning the following nonimmigrant statuses: B, F, and M (8 CFR 214.2(b), 214.2(f), and 214.2(m)); regulations relating to change of nonimmigrant classification for students 248.1(c), 248.1(d), 248.3(b), and 248.3(d)) and regulations relating to school approval and the withdrawal of approval (214.3 and 214.4).

One may certainly argue that a thorough knowledge of these regulations is not necessary for admission officials whose duties as DSOs are generally limited to signing initial I-20s to bring F-1 or M-1 students to their institutions and do not include advising international students (concerning maintaining nonimmigrant status, student employment, changes of status, or reinstatement to status, for example). However, even a cursory reading of the above regulations will give the admission DSO a better understanding of the issues surrounding acquiring and maintaining F and M status and will assist in providing better advice to the incoming students, especially those who are transferring between U.S. institutions or changing status.

Finally, DSOs should develop a philosophy which helps them to operate above all as educators who must act within the legal framework of federal rules, while at the same time meeting the needs of their institutions and their (prospective) students.

Guidelines for F-1 and M-1 Status

Approved institutions issue I-20A-Bs and I-20M-Ns to admitted students so that they may obtain the proper U.S. nonimmigrant visas at U.S. embassies or consulates and student status (F-1 or M-1) upon entering the U.S. An I-20A-B is issued to academic and language students; an I-20M-N is for vocational students.

Ground Rules for I-20s

Rules for issuance of I-20A-Bs and I-20M-Ns are strict. Either type of I-20 must be signed by a DSO in the United States and only after page one and three have been completed. Four conditions must be satisfied before an I-20 may be issued:

- The student must have made written application to the school.
- The student's application, transcripts, financial statement, and supporting documents must have been "received, reviewed, and evaluated at the school's location in the United States."
- A school official must have found that the student meets all standards for admission to the institution.
- A school official responsible for admission must have accepted the student for enrollment in a full course of study, as a full-time student.

The eligibility granted by an I-20 should not be conditional—that is, the I-20 should not indicate that admission depends on fulfilling certain conditions, such as completing an ESL program. In this instance, a student could be admitted to an English as a Second Language program, be issued an I-20 for that program, and then later be issued another I-20 for transfer into a degree program upon proving English proficiency. Another example is when a student is admitted and issued an I-20 for a nondegree program of study (must still have a full course load) to complete prerequisites for being issued an I-20 for starting a graduate degree program.

Finally, no fee may be charged for issuing an I-20A-B or I-20M-N (although an institutional application fee is certainly permissible).

Judgment of School Official

In fulfilling the four conditions above, a school official must apply professional judgment on a number of issues, including:

- *Academic Requirements:* The applicant has, in the institution's judgment, completed preparation equivalent to that required of a U.S.-educated applicant seeking admission at the same level.
- *Language Proficiency:* The applicant has sufficient proficiency in English to study on a full-time basis, or, if such proficiency is lacking, arrangements will be made to provide appropriate English instruction.

  To establish proficiency, the institution may require submission of results from a standardized English exam (the most common is the Test of English as a Foreign Language, TOEFL) as part of the application process. The institution may also accept other evidence of English proficiency (i.e., interview or performance in previous English courses). Also, English proficiency would not be necessary if the students will be taught in another language in which they are already proficient, or if the students will enroll in a full course of English as a Second Language study. (See Chapter 10—English Proficiency and Admission Policy.)
- *Financial Certification:* The applicant has demonstrated that sufficient funds are available to cover all school expenses. (See Chapter 12—Certification of Finances.)
- *Full Course of Study:* The applicant is being admitted to enroll in a full course of study as a full-time student leading to the attainment of a specific educational, professional, or vocational objective. Note that a "specific objective" is not necessarily a degree, and that short-term nondegree study is permissible provided it is aimed at a coherent educational goal and the student will study full time.

The I-20 and the Prospective Student

There will be times when the school's I-20 is slow to arrive or is lost in the mail. In such cases it is appropriate for a prospective F-1 student, but not a prospective M-1 student, to request from the U.S. consular officer a B-2 visa ("visitor for pleasure") for the purpose of entering the United States. Provided that there is solid evidence of admission to the U.S. school, the consular officer will write "prospective student" on the visa. A "prospective student" notation may also be issued if a prospective student is coming to the U.S. for college visits to schools or for an interview as part of an admission application. Once the applicant is admitted to an institution and receives the I-20A-B, she/he in general should not have a problem in applying to change status from B-2 to F-1. Without "Prospective Student," change of visa will be denied.

Changes of Status Relating to F-1 and M-1 Students

Admission officers may have questions about the appropriateness of issuing an I-20 in certain circumstances. Some of these situations are discussed below:

M-1 to F-1: It is not appropriate to issue an I-20A-B to a student in M-1 status if the goal is to apply for a change of status to F-1 from within the United States. M-1 students may not change from a vocational to an academic educational objective while in the United States and therefore cannot change to F-1 status. The M-1 student would have to leave the United States after completing the vocational program and apply for the F-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. In this instance, an I-20A-B may be issued. Also, it would be appropriate to issue an I-20A-B if the student was initially admitted in M-1 status by error at the port of entry but is in actuality in an academic or language program.

B-2 to F-1 or M-1: The DSO may issue an 1-20A-B or I-20M-N to an individual in B-2 status, but the applicant should be advised that the requested change of status may be denied if the visitor visa is not marked "prospective student" as described above. Also, if the B-2 visitor recently arrived in the U.S. and soon thereafter makes an application to change status to F-1 or M-1, the INS may see this action as visa fraud in that the visitor's apparent intent was not to be a "tourist" but actually to become a student. As such, INS' general interpretation in such cases has been that when the applicant applied for the B-2 visa, the application for the B-2 visa was made because the applicant was doubtful that he or she would be approved for the F-1 or M-1 visa. As a result, INS may well deny the change of status application.

F-2 to F-1 or M-2 to M-1: No special restrictions exist; an I-20A-B or I-20M-N should be executed in the usual manner and submitted with the I-539.

J-1 to F-1: Unless the exchange visitor (J-1 status) is exempted from the two-year home-country physical-presence requirement (see J Exchange Visitor Status), it is not possible to change from J-1 to F-1 or M-1 status in the United States. Nevertheless, a person in J-1 status may properly receive an I-20A-B or I-20M-N, return home, apply at a U.S. embassy or consulate for an F-1 or M-1 visa, and thereby return to the United States without delay in F-1 or M-1 student status. The individual, however, would still be bound by the terms of the two-year rule.

Preparation of I-20s for F-1 and M-1 Status

Institutional Information

The school name, school official, and school address lines should provide the central contact point for INS matters pertaining to the admitted student. One may choose to designate the official or office to whom the student should report upon arrival at the institution. The school file number identifies the district that has jurisdiction over the school and always should be included.

Admission Information

Items 3-6 (1-20A-B; items 1-8 on the I-20M-N): These items show that the school has reviewed and evaluated the student's application before issuing the I-20.

Item 3a: "***Initial attendance*** at this school" should be checked when the student is new to the institution, either from abroad or from within the United States.

Item 3b: "***Continued attendance***" should be checked to indicate the student is continuing with the program of study at that institution.

I-20A-B: Item 3b: "***Transferred*** from _____ (name of previous institution)" should be marked and completed when the student is transferring from another U.S. college or university (not a foreign one). This applies both to transfer within the same level of education and to a new level. Transfer from a U.S. English language program to an academic institution also constitutes "transfer" for the purposes of this item.

I-20M-N Item 3b: "***Transferred*** from _____ (name of previous institution)" works the same as for the I-20A-B and should be marked and completed when the student is transferring from another U.S. vocational institution. Note that an M-1 student may not transfer schools after six months in M-1 status.

Item 3d: "***Use by Dependents***" is used to establish the F-2 or M-2 classification for a spouse and children at a time after the student has entered the U.S. in F-1 or M-1 status. Names and birth dates of the dependents should be entered on page 4. The school official must verify that sufficient funds are available to sustain the family members seeking F-2 or M-2 classification before issuing the I-20.

Item 3e: "***Other***" may be used in conjunction with 3b (continued attendance) when the student is continuing on to a new program but in an educational level comparable to the old one (i.e., fifth-year or second-

bachelor's status after the initial bachelor's degree). "Other" also may be used in combination with 3a (initial attendance) to cover a newly admitted graduate or professional student whose first degree is about to be completed in the United States, and who will therefore undergo a "change in level" when enrolling at the new school.

Item 4: "***Level of education*** the student is pursuing or will pursue in the United States:" Complete the checkbox with the level appropriate to the incoming student.

Item 5: The "***major field of study***" probably is the one indicated by the student as part of his or her application, though the DSO should be sure to state the exact title of the program to which the student has been offered admission.

I-20A-B: At the undergraduate level, some students are undecided or are not yet ready to enter a department. In these cases a broad designator such as Science, Business, Liberal Arts, Pre-major, etc., is appropriate.

I-20M-N: The "major field" designation is especially important because an M-1 student, unlike an F-1 student, cannot change fields of study.

Item 5: Reporting date. The DSO should indicate the latest date by which the student may report to the school to complete registration and begin classes on time. The student will be permitted to enter the United States once the nonimmigrant visa has been issued. The nonimmigrant visa can be issued up to 90 days before the entry date on the I-20. A notation under Item 9: "Remarks" should be used if the school wishes to recommend an earlier date of arrival for orientation or other purposes.

If the student will not be able to arrive by the reporting date (often because of a late admission and subsequent late I-20 issuance), the DSO after consulting with the academic department may fax the student a letter with permission to arrive late. This step is often necessary to avoid questions at the port of entry or avoid a visa denial at the U.S. embassy when the student applies for the F-1 or M-1 visa.

Item 5: Length of Study and Completion Date

I-20A-B: The "normal length" for the study program is the standard length of time needed to complete the program from beginning to end. "Four years," then, would be the length given for most bachelor's degrees (though four to five years is also becoming quite common); periods given for masters and doctoral degrees vary, but three and five to six years, respectively, are commonly assigned. The "expected date of completion," on the other hand, refers to the projected date of program completion for the student named on the I-20. If the student is new to a degree or certificate program, (Item 3a: Initial will be checked), the "normal length of study" period of time should roughly equal the time from the reporting date to the expected completion date, both indicated in Item 5.

However, if the student is transferring in from another U.S. institution (for example, a third-year student in a bachelor's of arts program), the normal length of study line may indicate four years, but the time from reporting date to completion date would probably be only two years. There could also be a difference in the two time periods if the student enters the institution with substantial transfer credits or advanced standing. Finally, the "normal length of study" period and consequently, "expected date of completion" date should not include consideration that the student might study year round or take unusually heavy course loads, unless this is standard practice in the program to which the student is admitted.

(Note: under INS guidelines a grace period of up to one year may be added to a student's estimated date to complete a program of study. Although not required, it is a good practice to add this grace period when possible because of the procedural burdens involved in seeking the necessary program extensions when the completion date has expired.) Therefore, the normal length of study for a full bachelor's program may read "five years (includes one-year grace period)."

I-20M-N: The "normal length of study" as used on the I-20M-N should reflect the projected length of time required to complete a program of study. This period may well be longer than one academic year. But the completion date on the I-20M-N cannot be longer than a year from the arrival date. The date of completion may be more than one year from the reporting date, but in such cases the I-20M-N must be reissued each year. The student has 30 days beyond the completion date to depart from the United States.

Item 6: English Proficiency. In almost every case the DSO will indicate that English proficiency is required of the new student (exceptions would be a full-time English language program or a program taught entirely in another language in which the applicant already is fluent), and then mark item 6(a) or 6(b) as appropriate. If the student has been judged already proficient in English, it is good practice—though not mandatory—to state under "Remarks," or elsewhere on the I-20, how the institution determined this proficiency (i.e., 215 TOEFL score or some other brief notation). (See Chapter 10—English Proficiency.)

Items 7 and 8: Financial Information. Items 7 and 8 give a thumbnail balance sheet of the institution's costs and the student's resources. For a more detailed discussion of the procedural considerations behind these two items. (See Chapter 12—Certification of Finances.)

School Certification

The I-20 certifies that certain steps have been taken to comply with regulations regarding admission of international students. The form should therefore be completed fully and carefully, with due attention to the responsibility being assumed by the DSO in signing the document (see the paragraph directly above the DSO signature line).

Dispatching the I-20

After signing the dated form at the bottom, the DSO should make a photocopy for the institutional files and then remove the carbon copy between the School Copy and Student Copy before delivering both copies to the student (if not creating a laser-printed version of an I-20).

Automated Preparation of I-20s and IAP-66s

Government-issued I-20s and IAP-66s were designed to be completed using a typewriter. At present, technological advances beyond the typewriter are available to the DSO and RO. A variety of options exist for faster and more accurate typing of I-20s and IAP-66s, for creating templates to fill in, type, and print them, or the ability to create, complete, and print the forms themselves.

Although the investment in the hardware and/or software to create I-20s and IAP-66s electronically may run into several thousand dollars, the advantages seem to outweigh the disadvantages. Regardless of whether the international or admission office creates its own database system with printing capabilities or purchases a ready-made or readily adaptable software package, the information is then easily accessible for viewing student files or for running multiple reports (such as by I-20 ending dates to ensure that students are notified to request an extension before the I-20 expires). Also, if a student has lost the I-20 and needs it replaced quickly, the keystrokes to create a new I-20 are minimal, and the student is soon out the door with the new I-20 (assuming that status is still valid and no major changes such as changes in the student's financial situation have occurred).

Printing I-20s and IAP-66s

If an automated system is used to create the I-20, a laser printer is required to give the level of detail required by INS. A laser printer with duplex capability (copying to both sides of the paper) is the most efficient and

timely way of printing the I-20s, but a laser printer without this function will certainly work as well. Until the Department of State changes the IAP-66 form to enable it to be printed via a laser printer, the form will need to be completed with either a typewriter or daisy wheel or dot matrix printer. This type of printing is necessary because the IAP-66 form consists of four copies of the same page (white, yellow, pink, and green). The printing needs to "impact" or strike the page, creating a carbon copy image that will print on the copies beneath the first copy.

Software Packages

Small-volume offices also can benefit from computerized approaches. DSOs and ROs who wish to partially automate can consider the following ideas:

Word processing programs: A word processor can be used to create documents that are in effect templates for the 1-20 or IAP-66. Setting up the proper spacing is difficult, but reasonable results can be obtained through trial and error.

Commercial forms packages: Several software companies sell programs designed to speed the preparation and printing of forms. These programs allow the preparer to create a template for virtually any form and to incorporate calculations and other shortcuts. The best packages can be integrated with off-the-shelf database programs. This will permit the preparer to download the data needed for an I-20 or IAP-66 from a mainframe into a program such as Excel and then move the information into the fields of the form-printing program.

Mainframe solutions: The admission or international office with a truly large I-20 and IAP-66 workload may want to consider calling upon the services of the school's computing center. It is well within the reach of any competent campus data processing unit to develop a system to produce a complete (or nearly complete) I-20 or IAP-66 as part of every international student's offer of admission. However, customization by the computing center can often be expensive. The international or admission office may want to develop a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether or not to purchase ready-made software or invest in customization to the university's data system. If the institution is considering the purchase of an institutional-sized relational database, such as PeopleSoft, it would be important to determine the database's capabilities to create the documents and records needed for the international or admission office.

Commercial software: Although the methods described above will work, probably the most efficient production of I-20s and IAP-66s will be to use software specifically designed to create them. Several companies in the 1990s created software specifically to produce I-20s, IAP-66s, as well as other commonly used INS forms in the international office, such as the I-538 and I-129. These companies often advertise in AACRAO and NAFSA publications or exhibit in national AACRAO and NAFSA conferences. These companies are also working to keep abreast of the latest CIPRIS developments so as to be CIPRIS-compliant whenever those software specifications are finally made public.

M-1 Status: Definition and Relationship to F-1 Status

M-1 student status is appropriate for an international student who plans to pursue a full course of study at an established vocational or other "recognized nonacademic institution" authorized to enroll M-1 students. The range of institutions covered by M-1 provisions is fairly broad, and includes:

- community, technical, and junior colleges;
- postsecondary vocational and business schools that confer recognized degrees or have established that their credits are accepted by recognized institutions of higher education;
- high schools offering a vocational or other nonacademic curriculum.

Three items of special interest to the DSO are mentioned as follows:

Choosing the Appropriate Status
A school authorized to issue both I-20A-Bs and 1-20M-Ns should make a careful assessment of the applicant's goals before deciding which form to prepare. If the student's goal is a single, terminal technical or vocational program, the I-20M-N is appropriate. On the other hand, if the student has goals that may ultimately lead to a bachelor's or professional degree, it is far preferable to arrange for F-1 student status through issuance of an I-20A-B. The student's intent is important in this determination, and the admission official may wish to construct the school's application form in a way that requires the international applicant to declare a primary intent (vocational/technical vs. academic/professional) as part of the admission process.

ESL and Vocational Students
Because F-1 status is by definition an appropriate status for language training, the DSO may wonder about the proper documents for an ESL student bound for vocational training. INS regulations are clear on this point: if the student's primary intent is vocational/technical training, and if English instruction is being sought at the *same* institution, the student should be issued an I-20M-N.

Terms of Admission
In contrast to F-1 students, M-1 students are not eligible for admission to the United States for "duration of status." They are admitted to the country until a specified date and, while the initial period may be extended to complete the proposed program, the authorized stay written on the student copy of the I-20M-N will not exceed one year at any given time.

Getting a Visa: "What Becomes of that I-20 I Signed?"

Starting the Process

The admission officer must understand that the initial decision to admit an international student to the United States normally is made not by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, but rather by the U.S. Department of State.

The prospective student begins the visa process by applying for a student visa at the nearest U.S. consulate or embassy (or in Taiwan, at the American Institute). There a visa officer may review the student's passport, properly endorsed I-20, financial documentation, and proof of English proficiency to determine if the student is eligible to receive a student visa.

Applicants may be able to walk into the U.S. embassy in their home country, or they may be required to have an appointment. The waiting period before the appointment may be a matter of days or weeks. The applicant should check with the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate at http://usembassy.state.gov/ as to hours of operation and requirements for applying for a nonimmigrant visa.

An approved visa in most cases should be issued within a few days, except in cases of certain countries where delays for security checks are more likely to happen (i.e., Iran, Iraq, Libya, sometimes China and some former Eastern-bloc countries). If the visa application is approved, the embassy or consulate generally returns the I-20A-B or I-20M-N to the student in a sealed envelope for presentation at the United States port of entry.

There are some students who will not require a visa or passport. Exceptions to visa and passport requirements may include, under appropriate circumstances, Canadian citizens and permanent residents, and citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia. Such individuals may present themselves directly with their I-20 or IAP-66 to an immigration officer at a port of entry to seek F-1, M-1, or J-1 student status.

Criteria

The decision to grant the student visa will not hinge solely on the student's academic circumstances. The visa applicant must be able to show proof of a residence in another country that he or she has no intention of abandoning. A variety of considerations—whether there are siblings already studying in the United States; whether other relatives have already emigrated or have a business in the U.S.; the family's financial stability; a lack of promising job prospects in the home country; in short, any documentable evidence that the student might not return to the home country after completing the course of study—can weigh more heavily in the visa officer's decision than "mere" academic eligibility.

Role of Consular Official

The consular officer may decide that the student is not eligible for the visa and deny the application. The student might reapply as early as the next day if the denial was based on insufficient documentation or change in the student's situation (the student should check the consulate/embassy web site to determine how soon she/he may reapply). If there is no change in the student's situation and the applicant will show the same documentation, the consular officer will most likely deny the application again.

The ultimate decision to approve or deny a visa application, however, is a matter of the consular officer's professional judgment and is not subject to second guessing by the U.S. school. Even so, a letter of clarification or other communication from the school to the visa officer may be helpful in cases where academic eligibility, date of arrival, or some similar issue was a factor in the denial.

Port of Entry

Upon arrival in the United States via a border post or by sea- or airport, the student will go through the Immigration and Naturalization station at the port of entry. Here the I-20 or IAP-66 and financial documentation are presented again. The immigration official must be satisfied that the student plans to attend the institution named in the visa. If permission to enter the United States is given, the INS officer will issue the student the departure portion of a Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record), which shows F-1 or M-1 status and a unique "admission number." The officer retains the "School Copy" portion of the I-20 or the white and yellow copies of the IAP-66 and gives the student the I-20 "Student Copy" portion (called the Form 1-20 ID) or the student's (pink) copy of the IAP-66. The INS official will stamp the place and date of admission on either the I-20 or IAP-66. For F-1 and M-1 students, the official will also write in the student's admission number on the I-20, taken from the I-94. This admission number become the student's permanent record of student status and should be kept so long as there is any chance of reentering the United States in student status.

Period of Admission

The F-1 student is admitted to the United States for "duration of status"—that is, the period during which the student is maintaining satisfactory progress in a full course of study, plus authorized practical training if any, plus 60 days to prepare for departure from the United States. The M-1 student, on the other hand, is admitted on the I-20M-N and I-94 to the United States through a specified date. The student can, however, extend his or her stay until the vocational program is completed. But the I-20 and I-94 extensions can only be done up to one-year increments. For example, if the vocational program takes three years, the student would need to have three different I-20M-Ns issued in one-year increments, since the I-20M-N cannot be issued for longer than one year. (Also at the end of the student's last I-20, INS would allow an additional 30-day grace period to arrange for departure from the country).

The new student is required to attend the school whose I-20 A-B/M-N the student used to apply for the F-1/M-1 visa or fall immediately out of status. Exactly how long the student must attend that institution is a gray area not defined specifically in the F-1/M-1 regulations (8CFR 214.2(f) or 214.2(m)). If the student uses one institution's I-20 to enter the U.S. and then immediately wants to attend a second institution, the safest policy is for the second institution to assist the student in filing a reinstatement application to INS.

Transfers, Reinstatements, and Return to Status by Foreign Travel

Transfers

If the F-1 or M-1 student attending a U.S. institution wants to attend another U.S. school, the student will go through the international admission procedures at the new institution. This will include providing the new school with new financial documentation and confirmation from a DSO at the old school concerning the student's valid status. Usually the admission official sending a transfer form to the DSO at the old school accomplishes this latter procedure. If the admission official/DSO receives confirmation that the student was in status, the admission official/DSO makes a new I-20 marked 3b "transfer" for the student.

> ***For F-1s:*** When the F-1 student arrives, the DSO should write or stamp on the student copy of the I-20A-B that the student has transferred to the new school on that date. Then the school copy of the I-20 is sent to the INS data processing center and a copy of the new I-20 is sent to the international office at the old school. The transfer notation on the I-20 must be completed within 15 days of the beginning of the school's semester. The DSO then has 30 days from making the transfer notation on the I-20 Student copy to send the I-20 School copy to the INS Data Processing Center and a copy to the old school.

> ***For M-1s:*** If an M-1 student wishes to transfer, the student may not transfer to another school after six months from the date the student was first admitted or changed status to an M-1. The transfer is accomplished by making a new I-20M-N and sending both copies, along with a completed I-538 form and the I-94 to the local INS office for processing. The INS office will authorize the transfer via a notation on the I-20, send the School copy to the INS processing center and mail the Student copy and I-94 to the M-1 student. The new I-20 will be valid for the time necessary for the student to complete the vocational program or up six months—depending on when the student transferred. (Remember that an I-20M-N cannot be valid longer than 12 months, thus the time on the previous and current I-20M-N cannot be for more than one year). If the student does not complete the vocational program within those six months, an extension I-20M-N can be issued.

Reinstatement

If for some reason the DSO at the old institution indicated that the student should be considered out of status, the DSO at the new school should review the facts and consult with the student (and the DSO at the old school if necessary for clarification). If the DSO at the receiving institution indeed agrees that the student should be considered out of status, the DSO should, in most cases, advise the student to apply for a reinstatement with the nearest district INS office or suggest that the student leave the U.S. and return with a new I-20.

If the reasons for the student being out of status are overly complicated and approval of the reinstatement seems doubtful, the DSO may recommend the reentry procedure or advise the student to consult an immigration attorney. If the student is approved for reinstatement, this approval restores the F-1 or M-1 status, threfore not affecting the time spent in status that can be applied toward the time in status requirements for eligibility for practical training.

Reentry and New Status

If the student decides to end his or her unlawful status by leaving the U.S. and reentering (obtaining a new visa may be necessary and can be an additional complicating factor in the decision to reinstate or reenter), this process does not "reinstate" the student to his or her old status but gains the student a new F-1 or M-1 status. The distinction is important because in order to be eligible for practical training, the F-1 student must have been a full-time student for nine months and in status to apply for practical training, and the M-1 student can only do practical training after completion of the vocational program at a rate of one month for each four months studied. If the student reenters the U.S. with a new F-1 status, the nine-month requirement (or the

"nine-month clock" as it is commonly called) must be completed again and any time accrued toward that nine months is not valid. (The nine-month clock is reset to 0). For the M-1, only the time from the new entry into the U.S. counts toward post-completion practical training (at the rate of four months of study entitling the student to one month of practical training).

Forms and Recordkeeping

Required Records and Documents

A school must maintain certain documents and information on each F-1 and M-1 student for whom it has issued a Form I-20A-B or 1-20M-N during the entire time the student attends the school and until the school reports to INS that the student has left the institution or failed to carry a full program of study. The following information must be maintained on each student:

Name
Date & place of birth
Country of citizenship
Address (residence address, not a PO box)
Full-time or part-time status
Date of commencement of studies
Degree program and field of study
Any practical training certification & beginning and ending dates of certification
Termination date (i.e., date enrollment at institution ends) and reason, if known
Documents and information related to student's qualifications for admission
Number of credits completed each term
Photocopy of student's 1-20 School copy

This information need not be located in a central place, but it must be available for any specific INS inquiry.

J Exchange Visitor Program

The J Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) was created in substantial measure by enabling legislation known as the Fulbright-Hays Act (1961). The Exchange Visitor Program, initially directed by the Department of State, was overseen from 1978 to 1999 by the United States Information Agency (USIA) before being returned to the Department of State. The EVP utilizes the following categories of exchange visitors: student, trainee, teacher, professor, international visitor, alien physician, government visitor, research scholar, short-term scholar, specialist, and camp counselor.

The exchange visitor classification has its own Certificate of Eligibility, the IAP-66. The IAP-66 is issued by a sponsoring agency or organization that has been authorized by DOS (formerly by USIA) to pursue specified educational objectives (corresponding to the categories of exchange visitors) under the exchange visitor program. A U.S. college or university may be, but need not be, that sponsoring agency. Each sponsor has an identifying number and appoints a Responsible Officer (who may in turn appoint unlimited numbers of Alternate Responsible Officers (analogous in many respects to the Designated School Official for F-1 and M-1 programs and referred to in this chapter as RO/ARO) to administer the exchange program.

This section only sketches some central provisions of one category of the Exchange Visitor Program: the provisions and regulations that relate to the enrollment of students, especially where the institution itself will act as the sponsoring agency. ROs/AROs responsible for college and university students will find the relevant sections of the regulations in Title 22 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR), Sections 62.1-16; 62.23; 62.41-44; 62.50; and 62.60-62. Until recently, the primary relevant regulations concerning the Exchange Visitor Program was Title 22 CFR Section 514. But since these regulations referred to the United States Information Agency, when the Department of State assumed control of the Exchange Visitor Program, the regulations were redesignated as Section 62.

The Sponsoring Agency

DOS has defined the kinds of organizations that may serve as sponsors under the Exchange Visitors Program; colleges and universities are merely one type. It is beyond the scope of this section to discuss the procedure for becoming a sponsor. Readers interested in the process of becoming a sponsor will need to consult 22 CFR, Sections 62.5 and 62.6 for further information.

Even if an institution has no interest in sponsoring J-1 students, the likelihood of having exchange visitors on campus, admitted as international students by the institution but brought into the United States via a third -party sponsor, makes it worthwhile to be acquainted with "J" regulations. Many schools, however, will be in a position to choose between J-1 and F-1 status for some students. The responsibilities and procedures of exchange visitor sponsorship are thus bound up with a range of international admission activities. Most of the following comments are focused on the nexus between admission and sponsorship.

Obligations of the School as Exchange Visitor Sponsor

Obligations to the Student

As has been mentioned, the Exchange Visitor Program is largely conducted by DOS-designated program sponsors who recruit, place, and supervise exchange participants. Exchange visitor sponsors have a number of obligations which are analogous to those related to enrolling F-1 or M-1 students. The sponsor's RO and AROs are obliged to be thoroughly *familiar* with Exchange Visitors Program regulations. Elaborate rules spell out sanctions for sponsors who fail to abide by federal rules.

When the U.S. school is the sponsoring agency, it must ensure that exchange visitors are eligible for the program and that the program is suitable to their backgrounds and experience. The college or university must provide the participant with specific information about travel, housing, and costs. The institution must also explain the characteristics of the Exchange Visitors Program, including the two-year home-country physical presence requirement. The institution assumes the responsibility for verifying that the participant has adequate English proficiency (or will be provided with instruction if proficiency is lacking) and also has sufficient funds to pay for all anticipated expenses. The sponsor must verify that each J-1 exchange visitor and any J-2 spouse and dependents have health insurance coverage that will provide certain levels of medical benefits, repatriation of remains, and expenses associated with possible medical evacuation. Finally, the school in its role as sponsor must provide appropriate orientation both to acquaint the visitor with the program and foster in the visitor a positive impression of American society.

Obligations to the Department of State

In 1993 USIA established significantly tighter controls on the issuance and custody of IAP-66s. From that point onward, the sponsor had to keep a record of all forms used, including those destroyed or deemed unusable, and account for the forms to USIA as part of annual reporting procedures.

Sponsors also must "monitor" the visitors participating in their program to ensure 1) that they are involved in the activities designated on the IAP-66; 2) that their progress and welfare are maintained; and 3) that their addresses, phone numbers, etc., are available to DOS, if needed. Sponsors must retain all records relating to exchange visitor activities for three years.

These responsibilities are exercised through the RO/ARO. In addition to advising and assisting exchange visitor participants, the ROs/AROs must report as required to DOS and the INS and to act as custodian of their IAP-66s.

The Student as Exchange Visitor

Students are eligible to be exchange visitors if they will come to the United States "for the purpose of pursuing a formal course, or any combination of courses, research, or teaching, leading to a recognized degree or

certificate, in an established school or institution of learning." They may stay for an additional period of up to 18 months (36 months for postdoctoral research) for academic training.

College and university students may be placed in Exchange Visitors Programs when at least one of these conditions is met:

- The student's academic program is funded by a) the U.S. government; b) the government of the exchange visitor's home country; or c) an international organization of which the United States is a member.
- The program is implemented under an agreement between the United States and a foreign government and often through written agreements between American and foreign educational institutions (for student exchange programs).
- The student is supported "substantially" by scholarships, fellowships, and assistantships designed to promote international educational exchange (this category includes students funded by the U.S. school itself).

Exchange visitor students must be either pursuing a full course of study leading to a degree, or engaged in a full time, prescribed course of study of up to 24 months that need not result in a degree. The school may use its own definition of "full-time study" to monitor this requirement.

Distinctive Features of Exchange Visitor Status

Some of the characteristic features of exchange visitor status for students can be summarized as follows:

Sponsorship with special obligations: The agency that sponsors a J-1 student takes on responsibilities for the student's exchange activity in the United States. University sponsorship includes the duty to provide a certain level of academic and personal service to the exchange visitor. DOS regulations reinforce this principle by elaborating a range of sanctions and penalties that can be applied for negligence or willful violation. Sponsors will be required to terminate an exchange visitor's participation in a program if the exchange visitor fails to pursue the activities which were the reason for admission; is unable to continue in the program; violates the Exchange Visitor Program regulations or the sponsor's rules if, in the opinion of the sponsor, termination is warranted; or willfully fails to maintain the required insurance coverage. Unauthorized employment also is grounds for termination.

Two-Year Home-Country Physical Presence Requirement

Certain J-1 exchange visitors are required to live in their home countries for two years after completing their U.S. exchange activity before they are eligible to return in J-1 status, apply for permanent-resident status or for temporary statuses such as H (temporary worker in a specialty occupation) or L (intracompany transfer). This requirement applies if the exchange visitor is a) financed by the U.S. government or his own government; b) a national or resident of a country that has determined that any exchange visitor studying certain subjects must return because those skills are needed in the home country; or c) an individual who came as an exchange visitor to obtain graduate medical education or training.

Flexibility in employment: J-1 students are allowed on-campus work up to 20 hours per week without special authorization. Also, exchange visitor students may engage in paid employment for academic training for up to 18 months (36 months for post-doctoral research), during as well as after completion of the course of study. (This is similar to practical training for F-1 and M-1 students.) Moreover, the RO/ARO can authorize off-campus employment for an exchange visitor in cases of "urgent financial need," provided the student can still *maintain* a full course of study.

The IAP-66

IAP-66s are issued in much the *same* way as 1-20A-Bs. The responsible officer produces the form and sends the top three copies directly to the student with instructions on applying for a J-1 visa. (The fourth copy is kept by the RO for the sponsor's files.)

The Department of State's *Codes for Educational and Cultural Exchange*, supplied to each program sponsor, gives detailed instructions for completing the IAP-66. Some of the information required for this form, such as town of birth and position or job in the home country, may not be captured in the school's regular application procedures; it is therefore important to decide about the use of exchange visitor status at the earliest possible time.

ROs/AROs obtain copies of IAP-66s by writing to DOS' Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs office. ROs/AROs are to request a one-year supply of forms, with the quantity subject to review by the agency. Only requests from the RO or ARO will be honored. An IAP-66 may not be given or loaned to another sponsor unless authorized in writing by DOS.

Distinctions Between Processing J-1 and F-1/M-1 Students for Enrollment

The admission procedures for J-1 students are practically the same (application, academic credentials, financial documentation, transfer information if necessary) as for F-1 or M-1 students. However if the student needs to transfer or be reinstated, the procedures are different.

Transfer

If the student is transferring from a J-1 program at another U.S. institution, the new institution must send the IAP-66 (white, yellow, and pink copies) to the old institution for the RO/ARO to sign the release box in number 8 on the IAP-66. This completes the transfer to the new institution.

Reinstatement

USIA issued updated regulations in 1999 that allowed for reinstatement to program status. Before this recent innovation for the J-1 status, a J-1 exchange student only had the option to leave and reenter the U.S. to regain J-1 status. The regulations allow RO/AROs to issue a new IAP-66 for a status violation that took place no longer than 120 days from the date the IAP-66 was issued. The RO/ARO indicates that the IAP-66 is issued to "correct the record." The yellow copy of the IAP-66 is then sent to DOS. If the student has been out of status for more than 120 days or the status violation is more serious than just a technical violation (see 22 CFR 62.45 for further explanation), a request for reinstatement, along with the IAP-66 and a fee of $198 must be sent to DOS for a decision.

Comparison of F, M, and J Statuses

Purpose	F-1 Status	M-1 Status	J-1 Status
	Nonimmigrants pursuing a full course of study at an academic or language institution authorized to admit international students	Nonimmigrants pursuing a full course of study at an established vocational or other recognized nonacademic institution authorized to enroll international students	Nonimmigrants under the sponsorship of an organization or institution which has previously been approved by USIA or DOS
Primary Form	I-20-A-B	I-20M-N	IAP-66
Authorized Stay	Duration of Status (D/S) to complete an educational objective	Specific period not to exceed one year at a time	Duration of Status (D/S) to complete educational objective
Program Extension or Extension of Stay	Notification to INS via Form I-538 and new I-20A-B for same degree or educational objective	I-539 required to permit student to complete specified objective when authorized stay expires	New IAP-66 issued; DOS notified of extension
School Transfer	Notification to INS via new I-20 with DSO transfer notation (if transfer by reentering U.S., no I-20 sent)	Application with Form I-539; prohibited after six months in M-1 status	Requires approval of the sponsoring agency and notification to DC
On-Campus and Hardship Employment	Up to 20 hours per week on campus permitted, full-time during summers; off campus work authorization possible based on economic hardship	Not permitted	Up to 20 hours per week on campus; off campus authorization possible based on economic hardship
Off-Campus Employment (Practical or Academic Training)	Practical Training: 12 months maximum for optional practical training (OPT); unlimited curricular PT—but 12 months or more of full-time CPT will cancel the right to the 12 months OPT; CPT/OPT can only be part-time during academic year unless in thesis or dissertation study	Practical Training: 1 month for each 4 months of study; 6 months maximum	Academic Training: 18 months maximum; 36 months maximum for postdoctoral research includes paid work during and/or after course of study

IIRIRA: What This Acronym May Mean to You

IIRIRA refers to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996. This law added some new terms to the DSO/RO's vocabulary, such as unlawful presence, visa overstay, and CIPRIS. Although the INS and DOS regulations for this law have still not been published, these federal agencies have issued memoranda and cables indicating their interpretations of these concepts.

The admission officer would be well advised to have at least a cursory understanding of these concepts to best advise new students or to refer them to the institution's International Student Advisor.

Unlawful Presence [from INA statute Section 212(a)(9)(B)]

This term refers to a nonimmigrant falling out of status by staying longer than the ending date given on the nonimmigrant's I-94 (arrival and departure card). If a B-2 tourist status holder's I-94 expired on May 15, 2003, on May 16, 2003 that person would start logging day one of unlawful presence in the United States. If that person logged 180 days of unlawful presence and left the U.S. and tried to reenter, he or she could be barred from reentering for three years. If that person's unlawful presence time in the U.S. grew to more than one year, reentry could be barred for ten years. This is how unlawful presence can apply to statuses such as H-1, H-4, B-1, B-2, L-1, L-2, O-1, and O-3.

However, F-1, F-2, J-1, and J-2 status holders have I-94s without ending dates. Their I-94s are marked "D/S." This indicates "duration of status," meaning that the ending date of the I-94 is tied to the F-1 or J-1's status document (I-20 or IAP-66). For these F-1, F-2, J-1, and J-2 status holders, their unlawful presence clock can only starting ticking if they make some application or petition to INS or go before an immigration judge for a removal hearing. The specific wording of the INS memo and DOS cable relating to this concept may help keep the distinctions straight in the reader's mind (INS Memo HQIRT 50/5.12, September 19, 1997, P. Virtue; D.O.S. Cable 98 State 060539, April 4, 1998):

1. An immigration judge finds in the course of exclusion, deportation, or removal proceedings that a status violation has occurred, resulting in a termination of the alien's period of authorized stay.
2. INS determines in the course of adjudicating an application for an immigration benefit that there has been a status violation, resulting in a denial of a benefit.

Therefore, if INS denies the application or an immigration judge rules against a nonimmigrant who has a D/S I-94 in the exclusion, deportation, or removal hearing (a hearing to determine if there are grounds to "remove" the nonimmigrant from the U.S.), the denial of the application by INS or a negative ruling by the immigration judge begins the nonimmigrant's period of unlawful presence (and the 180-day clock starts ticking!).

Visa Overstay [from INA statute Section 222(g)]

IIRIRA introduced a related concept called visa overstay that is closely linked with unlawful presence. If a nonimmigrant holding an I-94 with an ending date stays one day past that end date (using our example above —May 16, 2003 for the B-2 status holder with the I-94 that expired on May 15, 2003), the visa for that status holder is automatically voided. From that day forward, if that nonimmigrant needs another visa, he or she must apply for it at a U.S. embassy or consulate in his or her home country.

For the visa overstay provision to apply to Fs and Js (again, their I-94s have no ending date, but are labeled D/S), the criteria is the same as for unlawful presence. INS must in the course of adjudicating an application decide that there has been a status violation resulting in the denial of the application. An immigration judge must rule against the nonimmigrant in a removal hearing, negating the nonimmigrant's status. In both instances, the nonimmigrant starts his or her period of unlawful presence, and this unlawful presence will also trigger the visa overstay provision. But unlike unlawful presence, there is no waiting period of 180 days before the three-year bar would come into effect. With the adverse INS adjudication or INS judge's ruling, the nonimmigrant's visa is immediately invalid.

CIPRIS [IIRIRA Section 641 (c)]

The third major impact on admission offices from IIRIRA is the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), a program of the INS. Until 2001, this program was known as the Coordinated Interagency Partnership Regulating International Students (CIPRIS). The goal of SEVP is to collect a variety of data to track F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents in the U.S. and have this system fully operational by 2005. Utilizing technological advances, the SEVP database through a web-based system will be linked with schools with F-1, M-1, and J-1 programs. The I-20 and IAP-66 forms will be altered to include a bar code capable of being scanned. When the student enters the U.S. with this new I-20 or IAP-66, the information is scanned into INS' database, and INS sends an e-mail to the school to inform the DSO or RO that the student has arrived in the U.S.

Upon arrival at the school, the student will apply for an INS identification card that will include biographical and academic data electronically embedded into the card. The student would subsequently use this card instead of an I-20 or IAP-66 for reentry into the U.S. Also, when there is some significant change (defined by INS) in the student's status, such as the student falls out of status, changes academic programs, transfers, or applies for economic hardship work authorization, the DSO/RO would send this information electronically to INS.

INS conducted a pilot program in the Southeastern U.S. from June 1997 to October 1999, instituted limited components of this system, and analyzed their results. But since that time, the exact specifications concerning how this tracking system will be implemented, the precise hardware or software requirements necessary for schools to maintain their part of it, and other vital questions have still not been made known by INS.

One component of the SEVP system that is scheduled for enactment is the SEVP fee of $95, instituted by IRAIIRA to pay for implementation and maintenance of the SEVP system. After the higher education community protested vigorously to Congress and INS about the IIRIRA requirement that they collect the SEVP fee, INS developed an alternative procedure. The fee will be collected by INS through a U.S. bank that will issue a receipt. F-1, M-1, and J-1 students, after they have received their I-20s or IAP-66s, will have to submit a (new) INS I-901 form and the $95 fee to a U.S. bank designated by INS via credit card, bank draft, cash, or some sort of secured Word Wide Web payment. The bank upon receiving the payment will mail a receipt similar to the INS form I-797 "Notice of Action" to the applicant. The applicant will then take that receipt, along with the other required documents (I-20 or IAP-66, financial documentation, etc.) to the U.S. embassy or consulate to apply for the F-1, M-1, or J-1 visa. The fee is not refunded if the applicant does not obtain the student visa. Without the receipt the visa will most likely be refused.

Study for F-1 Students in Secondary Schools [Section 214 (l) (5) of the INA]

The final component of IIRIRA that can strongly impact admission officials is the requirement that F-1 students who want to attend public secondary schools in the U.S. can only do so for one academic year and that they must pay tuition to that school. For the student to obtain the F-1 visa, the I-20 must indicate that the student has already paid the tuition to the school.

If the student wants to attend a private secondary school or can manage to come to a public secondary school in another nonimmigrant status, such as J-1, J-2, F-2, or H-4, the student is not limited to only one academic year.

F-1 students attending public high schools who then want to attend a U.S. university must apply for a transfer via an INS form I-539 after obtaining admission and an I-20 from the university. Care must also be taken that this application is made to INS before the F-1 student's I-94 expires. This is the only instance of an F-1 student having an I-94 that is not marked "D/S," but will instead have an ending date.

Who Can Study Without Documentation?

The preparation of I-20s or IAP-66s—and the fielding of anxious, insistent queries about them—can become so routine that the admission officer may forget that it is possible for some international students to study at a school, even on a full-time basis, without any special arrangements at all.

These fortunate folk are in the United States temporarily, under a variety of nonimmigrant classifications that do not prohibit their attending school. The DSO will want to be aware of these classifications, not only on grounds of giving better service to applicants, but also on grounds of work load: school officials have no formal responsibilities concerning these student aliens.

Individuals in the following classifications are not prevented from being students by the terms of their status: A, B, E, F-2, G, H, I, J-2, K, L, M-2, N, O, P, Q, R.

The list may seem odd at first glance, especially when the B (visitor) status is noted. But the school official will easily grasp the difference between being permitted to take one or two courses, on the one hand, and embarking on a full-time student career on the other. For instance, a person admitted to the U.S. in a diplomatic (A) status would not be fulfilling the terms of his or her admission by taking on study as a principal activity. The A- or B-status holder who wishes to study full-time must request to change status to the appropriate student status (F-1 or J-1); but part-time study, and even occasional short-term, full-time study, would not require issuance of an I-20 or a request for a change of status. The key is *primary intent.* If study is permitted (see above list) and the study is a *secondary intent,* then justification can be made for allowing the student to study—even full time! But the admission official who is not also an International Student Advisor would be well advised to have the prospective student consult the ISA concerning this discussion of intent and long-term study goals.

Note, also, that dependents of those in any of these statuses may be full-time students without coming into conflict with any requirements of their status. The son or daughter of an L-1 or H-1 alien who has been admitted to a U.S. college or university may want to think carefully before exchanging the freedom of their dependent H-4 or L-2 status for the relatively restrictive terms of the F-1 status.

Common Forms and Ordering Information

Most INS forms may be downloaded from the INS web site at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/index.htm or contact INS at 1(800) 870-3676 to order by phone.

Ordering I-20s: I-20s cannot be downloaded from the INS site and must be ordered by phone. DSOs may also fax forms requests (including for I-20s) to the INS Eastern and Western Forms Centers. INS has indicated that they may discontinue faxing to these centers and route forms inquiries through their web site. Check with their 1(800) 870-3676 number for details.

Ordering IAP-66s: In general universities with J-1 programs order their IAP-66 forms when they send their annual report to DOS via the IAP-37 form. If the program needs additional forms, they can contact the Exchange Visitor Program Designation Staff, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, at (202) 401-9810 to request emergency quantities of IAP-66 forms. The written address is U.S. Department of State, ECA/EC/ECD, SA-44, Room 734, 301-4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547.

Resources for the International Education Office

National Associations

http://www.aacrao.org
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers:
One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 520, Washington DC 20036
Tel: (202) 293-9161, Fax: (202) 872-8857, Internet: *info@aacrao.org*

http://www.nafsa.org/
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20005-4701
Tel: (202) 737-3699, Fax: (202) 737-3657, Internet: *inbox@nafsa.org*

Immigration Related U.S. Government Sources

Code of Federal Regulations. Title 8, "Aliens and Nationality," and Title 22, "Foreign Relations." Either U.S. Government Printing Office at (202) 783-3238 or access at http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/index.html

Federal Register (U.S. Government Printing Office) or access via http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html

Key Officers of Foreign Service Posts U.S. Dept. of State (order # 744-006-00000-7)
U.S. Government Printing Office ($5 per year); (web version)
http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/contacts/key_officers98/june/index.html

U.S. Social Security Administration: http://www.ssa.gov/

INS

INS web site http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/index.htm

INS regulations for the F, M, and J nonimmigrant classifications (8 CFR 214.2(f), 214.2(m), and 214.2(j), or the INS Operation Instructions go to http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/lawsregs/index.htm and follow the appropriate link.

INS also has a National Customer Service Center number that is good for general information about forms, benefits, etc., but not for specific advice about immigration cases or visa statuses.
1 (800) 375-5283

Department of State

This is a good general site for DOS services:
http://www.state.gov/www/services.html

The USIA regulations, formerly at 22 CFR 514, have been redesignated as DOS regulations at 22 CFR 62 and can be viewed at http://exchanges.state.gov/jvisa/J%20Exchange%20Visitor%20Program/index.htm

Site for DOS Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (J-1 Programs):
http://exchanges.state.gov/education/

Bureau of Consular Affairs site: http://travel.state.gov/
J-1 Waivers page: http://travel.state.gov/jvw.html
Visa Reciprocity Tables: http://travel.state.gov/reciprocity/index.htm

Revalidation of H, L, O, & P visas in the U.S.: http://travel.state.gov/hlop.html

Travel Warnings and Consular Info Sheets:
http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

Entry Requirements for U.S. Citizens to Other Countries:
http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html

U.S. Passport Info (and Advice for Traveling Abroad):
http://travel.state.gov/yourtripabroad.html

General Sources, Including Good Web Sites

Adviser's Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, 2000) $285 for nonmembers, $225 for members. Call (800) 836-4994

Govrel-L: For people interested in legislative, regulatory, and legal issues.
To subscribe: Send a message to *listserv@asu.edu*

Inter-L (Listserv for International Education), full information at http://www.manitouheights.org/intled/

Interpreter Releases; (Federal Publications, Inc). (615) 377-3322 ($370 a year)

Locating U.S. Embassies/Consulates Abroad:
http://travel.state.gov/links.html
http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/contacts/key_officers99/index.html
http://www.usembassy.state.gov/

Sites for Embassies/Consulates in U.S.:
http://www.embassyweb.com/

Canadian Embassy (visitor visa page):
http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/coming/evisa.html

Mexican Embassy (visitor visa page):
http://207.224.13.65/english/consuldad/srvextr/visa.htm

Making an Appointment at U.S. Embassy/Consulate in Canada or Mexico:
http://www.nvars.com/ or call 1(900) 656-2222 (There will be a $2.25 U.S. charge per minute.)

Tax Forms, Publications, and Information, Federal:
http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/plain/forms_pubs/index.html

Link to State Tax forms:
http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/forms_pubs/ftaframes.html

Good Page for Information about Taxes for International Students and Scholars (especially for tax treaties): http://www.windstar-tech.com/

Useful Currency Converter: http://www.oanda.com/cgi-bin/ncc

CHAPTER 12

Certification of Finances for Obtaining the Student Visa

Although institutions have more than one valid reason for wanting to know that international students can pay their bills, the central purpose for requiring certification of finances is to comply with federal regulations regarding the issuing of I-20A-Bs and I-20M-Ns. Proof of financial responsibility for the student is one of the essential items that must be reviewed and evaluated by an appropriate school official before an I-20A-B or I-20M-N can be issued. This legal obligation is placed on the institution chiefly to help assure that the F-1 or M-1 student has sufficient financial resources to cover the costs of education without resorting to unauthorized employment.

Regulations also require that school officials verify financial information before issuing an IAP-66 (Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 exchange visitor status). Even when the school itself is not the sponsoring party, it is common practice among institutions to ask for financial certification from prospective exchange visitors, if only to avoid hardship for the visitor and headaches for the international student adviser.

Federal regulations do not give specific guidelines concerning how institutions must verify an international student's financial resources. What follows is a brief digest of formal requirements, common practices among institutions, and sample documents from a variety of schools.

Definition of Financial Certification

Financial certification (sometimes called the "financial statement") is an affidavit or other written evidence provided by applicants that demonstrates that they have adequate funds to pay for the school's program of study and living expenses. What *form* of evidence the applicant presents is ultimately less important than the commitment that is established. The information must show clearly:

- who is responsible for the applicant's expenses;
- that the applicant (or sponsor) is willing to assume those expenses and is aware of the amount;
- that the pledge is backed by actual resources in the amount claimed.

This last item is, of course, the most difficult to confirm, and many institutions consider their job well done if they can accomplish the first two and mount a good-faith effort at the third.

Acceptable Sources of Funding

A school official may consider a wide range of financial resources as valid for financial certification. Funds may come from scholarships or fellowships, either from the institution itself or from outside it; from a government or sponsoring agency; from students' personal funds; those of their family; or even from a private third party (provided the source is dependable). However, the school should *not* consider funds from an applicant's anticipated earnings *while a student,* unless that employment amounts to financial assistance from the institution (i.e., a stipend or tuition remission for a research or teaching assistantship).

A nonstandard type of financial support is the payment-in-kind, such as a pledge from a relative living near the U.S. institution to provide lodging and food to an applicant. This type of financial assistance may be difficult to evaluate. One approach is for the applicant and the relative to review the institution's written summary of anticipated costs of attendance and consult with the admission officer. Then in writing the payment-in-kind letter, the relative can declare that the payment-in-kind will be equal to the dollar amount as estimated by the institution for room and board costs. This permits the institution to use a standard budget for each student and will give the U.S. consular or embassy official a consistent basis for evaluating the application for a visa.

Informing Applicants of the Cost of Attendance

The institution should prepare a written summary of anticipated expenses and provide it to each prospective applicant. Estimated costs should include the following, normally for a 12-month period:

- tuition and fees, including extra expenses for supplemental ESL study, if required
- books and supplies
- room and board (lodging and food)
- health and other recommended insurance
- transportation
- miscellaneous living expenses (clothing, telephone, recreation)

This summary should, in short, give a realistic estimate of what an international student could expect to spend in one year, on everything from tuition to toothpaste, in support of a modest standard of living. In addition, the summary of anticipated expenses should include information concerning the cost for one or more dependents. Thus the prospective applicant can budget for these costs if he or she intends to come with a family.

Estimates for student living expenses as prepared by the institution's financial aid office can be a good starting point for preparing estimates for international students. Keep in mind, however, that international students may have settling-in costs that exceed those normally borne by local students. (On the other hand, some international students may be accustomed to living more frugally than their American counterparts.) Remember, too, that student financial aid budgets may be based on costs for the academic year, whereas the international budget should include living expenses for the vacation months as well (though not necessarily summer school tuition costs). The 12-month budget should apply even if the school assumes that its international students will return home when school is not in session. (Note: An exception to the 12-month guideline would be for programs that are to be completed in one academic year.)

Note that the I-20A-B and I-20M-N (but not the IAP-66) require the designated school official to break down estimated costs into four categories (tuition and fees, living expenses, expenses of dependents, and other). This means that although the school's own statement of estimated expenses may include some helpful subcategories, those subcategories should be set up in a way that is consistent with the reporting required on the I-20. In contrast, the IAP-66 allows only for a total funding amount.

Evidence Collected by the Institution

The institution must collect evidence of financial support with two goals in mind: 1) to have a guarantee of sufficient funds for the first year of study, as well as assurance that similar funding will be available throughout the full course of study, barring unforeseen circumstances; and 2) to have financial information available in a way that can be readily reported on I-20A-B/I-20M-N or IAP-66. Federal regulations do not specify precisely what constitutes adequate proof of financial support, and institutions therefore follow a range of practices.

Bank letters, sponsors' testimonials and letters of employment, scholarship award letters, affidavits of support, etc., can all be valuable and persuasive evidence of sufficient finances. Still, it is recommended that the *institution* ask the applicant (or parent or sponsor) to complete a special form that shows the institution's estimated costs and requires declaration of specific sources and amounts that are being pledged. This type of statement has a number of advantages. First, it provides evidence that those who will pay the bills are indisputably aware of the school's estimate of expenses. Second, the form can be designed to give the international admission official a convenient way to obtain a written promise of the funds in the form of a signature by the person (student, parent, or sponsor), who will be committing the financial support. Finally, a form simplifies the process of declaring financial information in U.S. dollars: the form can directly require that amounts be recorded in U.S. funds.

Bank statements and letters from the guarantor's banker are probably the most common piece of information provided by applicants. Arguably, such documents may not be entirely trustworthy where amounts are concerned—money can be moved in and out of bank accounts to create a false impression. Also, while these "bank letters" may shed light on resources, they provide no direct acknowledgement from the guarantor as to what his or her costs will be for supporting the applicant. The same is true of general affirmations from relatives or other sponsors ("I agree to pay all of Ms. X's expenses while she is a student at College Y.") A special form that is tied to an explicit budget and that requires a pledge of a specific amount is therefore extremely useful, even if it is not considered sufficient by itself (see Sample Documents at the end of the chapter).

Special Considerations That May Arise

If the school official has doubts about the student's ability to get the pledged funds into the United States, certain options are available. *NAFSA's Adviser's Manual of Federal Regulations Affecting Foreign Students and Scholars* (2000) advises:

> If there are restrictions [on the transfer of dollars], the student should present evidence that they will not prevent the funds from being transferred. Alternatively, the school may wish to require an advance deposit of tuition and perhaps living expenses as well before issuing the Form I-20A-B.... The Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1986 permits such advance-deposit requirements (Section 4.3.3).

Sometimes it is necessary to deal with financial amounts provided in the home country's currency. Most city newspapers provide daily quotations of exchange rates for major currencies. Also, a search of the World Wide Web will produce web sites for several currency converters for almost all foreign currencies, such as http://www.oanda.com/cgi-bin/ncc. The school official can quickly use one of these to determine a conversion rate to U.S. dollars or to convert the total foreign currency amount to a total in U.S. dollars.

It is permissible to add a "grace period at the end of the F-1 student's expected period of study on I-20A-Bs (see Chapter 11—Admitting International Students: The Student Visa), though this is not possible for the I-20M-N and for M-1 students. (J-1 students can be given a time frame for completing a program of study so that an IAP-66 and an I-20 for the same degree and major would reflect the same beginning and ending dates, but this is not officially a "grace period" for the J-1 student, just a decision by the admission official as to how long to make the IAP-66.) This grace period has implications for the process of financial certification. If the allowable grace period is included, the designated school official may want to note this fact on the form so that the consular official is aware that funding for the grace period might well be unnecessary.

A newly admitted student may wrongly assume once a letter of admission is in hand, the question of financial responsibility has been put to rest. Schools should remind students, either at the time of admission or with the mailing of the 1-20A-B, I-20M-N, or IAP-66, that the students may be required to present documentary evidence of financial support when they apply for a visa and again when they apply for entry into the United States. For similar reasons applicants should be told to make a copy of the institution's financial statement before sending the original to the school.

Finally, in reference to applying for student visas at U.S. embassies or consulates, the school official can use this checkpoint to assist with verification of financial support if there is some slight question concerning the validity of a financial document from the home country. In issuing the I-20A-B, I-20M-N, or IAP-66, the Designated School Official or Responsible Officer can include a remark on the document, such as "Financial certification to be shown upon visa application." Then, the U.S. consular official who is most likely more familiar with financial documents from that country can query the prospective student. This technique can also be used when time is short, and the prospective student has not had time to send you original evidence of financial support but only faxed copies.

Warning: Using the U.S. embassy or consulate to examine financial documents should be done sparingly and only as a last resort—and generally not for applicants in countries where prospective students already have a difficult time in obtaining F, M, and J visas. As a rule, U.S. colleges and universities, as issuers of

I-20s or IAP-66s, generally do not want to add to the level of scrutiny that prospective students already face in applying for U.S. nonimmigrant visas.

Sample Financial Certification Forms

On the following pages are Financial Certification Forms for several universities. Different universities may structure their forms differently and may ask the questions in a variety of ways. But they are all attempting to obtain the same basic information about the student's financial situation: who will pay, that the applicant/sponsor will pay and is aware of the costs, and that the applicant/sponsor has sufficient and actual funds as claimed.

http://www.baylor.edu/Admissions/pdf/finres2000.pdf

http://web.odu.edu/webroot/orgs/ao/ip/ip.nsf/files/finaff.pdf/$file/finaff.pdf

http://admissions.tc.umn.edu/inside/apply_00a.html

http://admissions.uoregon.edu/apply/pdf/iapp2001-02.pdf
(financial certification form on pages 3-4)

http://jumpgate.acadsvcs.wisc.edu/admissions/finverform

CHAPTER 13

Study Abroad Program Development and Legal Considerations

Introduction

Increasingly our campuses are being asked to educate people to function in a complex, multinational, and multicultural context. Study abroad is a vital and fast-growing part of internationalization for many institutions. At a time when change travels literally at the speed of light, internationalization is a core principle in the United States education community. The *1999–2000 Open Doors Report* published by the Institute for International Education reported that 129,770 students studied abroad. This is an increase of 14 percent over the previous year.

As a result of this rapid growth, study abroad programs are proliferating at such a rate that it is often difficult to make valid and academically defensible choices. Just sorting out the quality from the questionable is sometimes a challenge even when that has been your primary function for many years. Additionally, study abroad is never easy for campuses to assimilate. It never fits seamlessly into any campus curriculum. It is the necessary, but abrasive, round peg in the square hole. The question becomes how best to sort through the enormous possibilities to find the study abroad options that best suit your students and your institution.

This chapter will introduce the reader to the basic concepts of study abroad program administration. The discussion will focus on the various types of programs, the important procedures and processes, and the legal aspects of study abroad.

Program Variables

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the different variables for study abroad programs. Each variation has certain advantages and disadvantages to be considered in determining how your institution will define this aspect of internationalization.

Length of Study

The first and most obvious variable is length of study. Of the four options (semester or quarter, academic year, summer, or short term) most students in the United States study for a semester or a quarter term abroad. Much less frequent today is the student who spends a full academic year abroad, although originally this was the most standard model. It still has advantages. Full-year students have greater access to the full curriculum in most other educational systems (although the move to modularization in many universities abroad has provided greater access in recent years to semester-only students), and there is evidence that part of language acquisition is a function of time. Most students, studying in a second language, who remain abroad report significant shifts in their understanding and use of that language just past the one-semester mark. Greater cultural immersion is another plus. As with language skills, other lessons gained from cultural immersion may only be learned as a function of time.

However, while there are many sound arguments from the pedagogical viewpoint for the extended study model, it is realistically much more difficult to fit an entire year abroad into most U.S. degree plans. This is especially true, it seems, with the tendency for students to combine several majors and minors in the hopes of finding a "magic formula" that will guarantee financial security later in life. There is also the very American idea that faster is often better and that you can condense anything.

Summer programs are increasing at a surprising rate. These are frequently faculty-led, allowing a greater degree of curricular control, but they also increase liability vulnerability. The tendency for summer

study programs to be shorter and shorter (without a corresponding reduction in recommended credit) is of some concern. Cost may be one factor that is pushing this. Financial aid is in short supply for summer study even on those campuses where the financial aid policy is generally favorable to study abroad. There is also, however, the disturbing idea that students should get some credit just for "being there." Many institutions have had to carefully limit the amount of credit they are willing to grant from some programs.

Short-term study is another quickly growing option. This is particularly popular for non-traditional students who cannot be away from jobs or families for extended periods even during the summer. These are often January term classes or they are spring-break short tours offered for credit and, except for some intensive language study, they are almost always faculty-led. Such programs do open the door to international experience to students who might not otherwise be able to afford either the time or the money. Since these programs are a part of the academic year, financial aid is a little more accessible. However, the credit recommendations tend to be high for many of these programs, and they are very labor intensive for such a short duration.

Program Models

The next most important variable is the program model.

Direct enrollment in a foreign university is one of four primary models, and a reciprocal exchange is a common structure for this model. Direct enrollment places the U.S. student in the regular classroom of a foreign university thus providing the greatest immersion into the language and pedagogical system. Combined with a home-stay or regular university housing, this model provides some of the most intense cultural immersion possible. However, few foreign institutions have degree structures or academic calendars that easily match those of most U.S. institutions. The direct enrollment model requires a good understanding by advisors at both institutions of their differences and the allowances and adjustments that will have to be made on both sides to accommodate those differences.

A reciprocal exchange is sometimes the most effective way to manage a direct enrollment. This model has the benefit of fostering close cooperation between faculty and departments on both sides of the exchange, and it brings international students to the U.S. campus. Since tuition (and perhaps room and board, or just room and fees) remains at the home campus to be applied to the visiting international student, financial aid policies are often more flexible as well. And since faculty and departments know each other well, credit questions for specific requirements are often easier to prearrange. For some very structured degree or pre-professional programs, such as engineering, an exchange may be the easiest way to satisfy very specific class requirements. However, the U.S. institution must be prepared to provide a variety of support services. These include orientation and reentry counseling, cultural interpretation and preparation, academic and personal advising support, and emergency services in circumstances where families are thousands of miles away. While these same support services are required for all international students, the exchange student (because he or she enters in mid-degree and remains for only a short time) usually requires more intensive attention and assistance.

Some programs and campuses choose instead to set up a *"center" abroad*. This model typically offers U.S.-style classes taught primarily by local faculty (especially the language classes), but these classes conform to U.S. expectations. Centers typically host students from many different institutions (although the majority of students may still come from the founding institution). Class schedules can be largely predetermined and announced, and course descriptions and syllabi are readily available making credit preapproval easier. Immersion, however, is limited because this model intensifies the normal tendency for American students to "stick together" rather than venturing out into the local culture.

Faculty-led programs are usually smaller. They do not have the logistical advantages of a "center," such as library and computing facilities, but must find classroom space as well as housing and transportation. Some U.S. institutions prefer this model, however, because the classroom experience can be made to conform totally to that of the home campus. Resources are a problem since there is no local "base" from which to operate and immersion is often difficult if not impossible.

Finally, there are the *"combination" models* that provide students with the option of taking a class with other U.S. students or in the local university with other foreign students, or as a member of a regular class (depending, usually, on language skills). The program may provide housing, orientation, advising, and logistical support (or the comforting presence of a home-school representative) while instruction is provided exclusively by the local institution. Home stays may or may not be a part of the combined program depending most frequently on local custom and how much emphasis is placed on language acquisition by the home institution. These "combination" models (if carefully designed) can push the student into the culture while providing a safety net.

There are other less traditional study abroad models that are growing in importance. One of the most frequently used is the intensive language school. A wide variety of these schools exist in many countries. Intensive language schools typically provide 20 to 30 hours of instruction per week. They often provide homestays, but may also allow the student to stay in a hotel or *pension*. While the homestay is more productive for developing language skills, more mature students frequently prefer the privacy and independence of the other housing options. The school may also arrange optional tours, excursions, and lectures or classes about the local culture. Although these are usually not creditable, they do provide cultural context that enriches the language instruction.

Intensive language instruction is also offered by many universities abroad. Often a U.S. program is built around the university-offered classes. These programs sometimes provide a very high-quality model. The program provides orientation and support (and may arrange special housing) and may add additional creditable classes (sometimes in English) on the society or culture.

Academic internships and field studies in a variety of disciplines are growing rapidly in popularity, to the extent that many established programs or centers are adding these options to the curriculum. Professional fields frequently chosen by students in disciplines such as Business Administration and Communications may give preference to students with internship experience. Completing a solid degree program and obtaining practical experience has become increasingly important in many fields, even when applying for entry-level positions. Additionally, students in Biology, Sociology, Anthropology, and Ecology are increasingly using the field study as a basis for later research.

The key to creditability in both of these models is how well the experience is "frameworked" in an academic context. In the most standard format, the internship replaces one class and is accompanied by a related (and required) seminar. Students are evaluated both by their work supervisor and by their seminar instructor. Most typically a substantial written paper or research study drawn from a combination of readings is required, in addition to regular meetings and discussions with the seminar instructor.

Another model can be termed "study tour" for want of a more descriptive phrase. These are literally traveling classrooms where the instructor travels with the students and incorporates site visits into the instruction. While these offer a variety of comparative illustrations (for instance, a manufacturing plant in Germany compared to the same kind of plant in Hungary), the student never experiences cultural immersion. Study tours can be done very well when careful attention is paid to making the site visit an integral part of the classroom experience, but this type of study abroad experience can also degenerate into a sightseeing tour. Logistical arrangements are complicated, and this type of study is very demanding and time-consuming for the organizer.

Non-academic internships, service projects, and volunteer experiences abroad are an extension of similar activities encouraged (and sometimes required) by many colleges and universities in an effort to help students develop into well-rounded and responsible world citizens. Credit for such experiences, however, is not assumed. While these undoubtedly provide learning opportunities, the experiences are not always directed or structured in an academic framework and evaluation may be problematic. There are instances, however, where a portion of the experience (intensive language portion, for instance) is creditable.

Occasionally a student will request to be allowed to complete an independent study abroad. This must fall within the guidelines for such study as outlined on each individual campus. However, the student attempting such a study should be very independent, self-motivated, and generally have some previous experience

abroad in order to successfully complete the study. Resources are not generally available in the same way they are in the U.S. For instance, libraries may be private or have restricted access. The widespread availability of electronic communication, however, has made this type of study more manageable since students find it easier to stay in regular contact with the home campus.

Types of Experience

Another factor to consider in study abroad program management is the type of student experience the model provides. These types may be found in any length or model of program and must be kept in mind when advising individual students.

An *island program* is a type of study abroad experience characterized by American students studying, living, and frequently traveling together. Summer programs and faculty-led programs frequently fall into this category.

A *peninsular program* is a modification of the island model that provides some tie to the local community on a more than passing basis. Typically students may take some of their classes in a host institution, either with other foreign students or in regular university classes, but the program will provide the majority of the instruction. Housing may be with host families and the program may incorporate local students in language exchanges or other activities. Many academic internship programs fall into this category. While students in the internship program take classes together and live together, they have an involvement in the work community.

The *belaying program* is a much more attenuated version of the peninsular type. Typically, students in a belaying program would both live with local students and be directly enrolled in university classes; but the program would provide an orientation, advising, and additional aid as necessary. Host university classes would usually be translated and reported on the program transcript. In some instances, the program guarantees backup housing where none is available to visiting students in the host institution.

A *parachute* experience is when a student is directly enrolled in a host institution that provides all support services, instruction, and evaluation. Grades and credit are reported directly on the foreign transcript. This is best reserved for the most independent students, preferably those with some previous experience in traveling or living abroad. Even then the home institution has an obligation to confirm that sufficient support services exist within the host institution to properly orient, advise, and assist the student—especially in a crisis situation.

Program Structure

All of these study abroad programs can be administered in one of five different ways:

- home institution designs, supports and runs the program
- a partnership can be formed between the home institution and another institution (as in an exchange program)
- a consortium of institutions can contribute to the management of the program
- affiliation with an existing program, where affiliate institutions provide academic oversight or advising responsibilities
- a combination of the above

These various administrative models can be combined in a wide variety of structures There are probably as many different combinations as there are schools. Each choice has a variety of advantages and disadvantages, and each individual campus should find the model or models best suited to that particular institution. For instance, a student who directly enrolls in a foreign university for a full year with no outside support (a parachute student) requires little financial investment from the home institution. However, this choice provides the least curricular control. On the other hand, a small faculty-led summer class abroad gives the home institution the same curricular control as it has for any class taught on the home campus. However, the institution's liability risks are significant because of the reasonable assumption that the home institution has full responsibility for all aspects of the experience. There is, therefore, no right way to do study abroad. Rather each institution must determine what is best for it.

Necessary Institutional Decisions

Study abroad programming, in order to be most effective and enriching (both to the student and to the institution), must be as carefully designed and planned as any other academic program in the institution. Too often programs simply evolve without administrative structure, and it is much more difficult to impose structure retroactively. However, whether introducing study abroad to the campus for the first time or restructuring an existing program, certain institutional policy decisions must be made.

Program Design and Approval Procedures

The first step in the process is to define where study abroad fits in the institutional mission. Then define goals for the program that support the goals of the institution. The program structure and administration should confirm and sustain these institutional statements. (See Chapter 1—Institutional Mission Statement and Policy Considerations Regarding International Education.)

The decision on what model, length, and style of study opportunities are best suited to the institution should be made at the highest possible level. The balance of advantages and disadvantages offered by each variation should be weighed and measured against the institution's own best interests. Clear procedures for developing and approving new programs should be defined. This is probably most true for those programs designed and run wholly by the institution itself.

Credit Approval Authority and Procedures

The next most important decision concerns credit approval and procedures. Who will determine what is a creditable study abroad experience? What procedures will be in place to satisfy questions of appropriateness? How will that be documented? It is important that faculty and departments feel that they maintain control of the standards and content of departmental credit. At the same time, some provision must be made so that approval standards are reasonably consistent across the campus. Building a consensus of agreement on procedures that both uphold institutional standards and provide enough flexibility to allow a response to changes abroad before the first student goes abroad is vital to a successful campus program.

Many people "become" study abroad advisors overnight by appointment. Because the individual teaches a language, has at least one degree earned abroad, or has worked with international students coming to the U.S., the assumption is sometimes made that this person automatically knows about study abroad and other "things international." Of course, some of these same individuals have become recognized authorities in the field. However, assigning study abroad as an extra component with no thought to release time from teaching or other current responsibilities underrates the complexities of the position. While assigning study abroad to a current faculty member does provide some assurance that institutional standards will be safeguarded, an active program demands time and attention and is not easily done well as a part-time responsibility.

Financial Aid Applicability Policy

The last major institutional decision is related to financial aid. While federal aid must, by law, be allowed to travel for all approved study abroad (more about this in a later section), policy governing other types of aid must also be considered. The liberality of aid applicability is a good measure of the real level of institutional commitment to international education. A policy that severely limits the use of aid will not only limit the growth of study abroad, but will also limit the type of student who can participate.

There are financial advantages to having a thriving study abroad program on the campus (other than the institutional commitment to the ideal of internationalism). If one-third of the students are abroad at any given time, there is room in the dormitories and the classrooms for one-third more students. This is in addition to the growing impact a viable study abroad option has on recruiting and retaining the most competitive students.

These are practical side-benefits to developing this aspect of international education. The real value, however, is in providing an education that truly prepares students to function and communicate effectively in the new international reality.

Institutional Procedures

Advising

Study abroad advising requires many levels of information and skills. Some of the most important are:

- a good understanding of the purpose of study abroad as it relates to the institution's mission and goals.
- a thorough knowledge of the home institution's degree requirements, policies, and procedures as well as a good understanding of requirements for all majors and minors (including preferences and assumptions that are not stated in the catalogue).
- a good understanding of the structure and quality of the programs or institutions being considered for study abroad.
- counseling skills that will help determine the type of experience and the level of immersion best suited to particular students and will also identify students who should not go abroad. (As a general rule of thumb, a student should be slightly uncomfortable, but not threatened by the challenges of living and studying in another culture.)
- the ability to understand and explain the types of adjustments and challenges that take place in a term abroad. It is probably preferable (although perhaps not absolutely necessary) that the advisor has personal experience of this process.
- good administrative and organizational skills in order to design and run a program that will work in coordination with other administrative offices. This requires communication, documentation, and an understanding of the needs of those offices.

Application Procedures

Before initiating a study abroad application process, a campus must first decide which students will be allowed to study abroad and how those students will be selected. Will students be allowed to go abroad before the Junior year, or after the Sophomore year? Must students have a specific GPA? This is a more complicated question than it appears on the surface. Often students with a lower GPA benefit more from a term abroad than students with a high GPA. Other things being equal, the process of studying abroad may bring focus and maturity to the participant who then returns to the home institution as a better student. There are also instances where the overall GPA is low because of problems in a specific term. Perhaps the student entered intending premed, but changed to business after the first year. The decision to establish a GPA requirement should also take these students into consideration.

Study abroad application procedures fall into two categories. Some campuses have a general application that identifies students who meet the general home institution requirements for studying abroad. This general screening can be used to "weed out" students who should not go abroad or find those who will benefit most from the experience. It can also be used to limit the numbers of students going abroad without limiting financial aid or allowing only students with high GPAs to participate.

The second application process is program specific. Application types vary widely. Some require the student to provide academic recommendations, essays, course selection, an official transcript from every college attended, photos, application fees, and the signature of the appropriate home-school authority granting permission. Specialized programs may require a portfolio, telephone interview, language tape, writing sample, or graded sample of work, a resume, or a personal recommendation. Deadlines may vary widely, from one month to a year ahead of the start of the program. Most home institutions should clearly state an additional internal deadline for the completion and submission of applications and approvals.

It is generally preferable to have at least some portions of every application submitted to the Study Abroad Office for forwarding in order to insure that students are not applying independently without gaining the necessary permission and approval. This also allows the office to maintain copies of the most important information for future reference. It is an old cliché, but things really do get lost in the mail. The habit of keeping photocopies of the most critical portions of an application means that recommendations, etc., need not be rewritten in such cases. If you require that institutional approvals are signed and returned before an application will be released, such approvals and forms tend to be turned in promptly.

Some things may not be a part of the application. A program cannot require that a student disclose medical or disciplinary information as a prerequisite for acceptance. However, such disclosure can be requested as a part of the process of preparing and advising an accepted student on going abroad.

Some applications ask the study abroad advisor to provide information on the disciplinary history of a student. Naturally students with behavioral or severe emotional problems are discouraged from going abroad because the additional stress of adapting to a new culture may act as a trigger. Yet the study abroad advisor may not always be aware of problems—and the advisor is restrained by law from asking direct questions in this area. The Counseling Office or the Office of Student Affairs has this information, but each campus may interpret the regulations governing privacy differently. Some campuses have determined that such information may not be released under any circumstances. Others will release information with permission of the student. Others will release a general statement that the student has a disciplinary record without including details. An advisor must comply with stated institutional policy while trying to balance the student's, the school's, and the program's best interests.

Behavioral Standards, Academic Standards, Payment and Refund Policy

The extent to which an individual campus must have detailed and specific procedures in place to deal with these issues is dependent on how directly the campus controls the experience. A faculty-led program or a campus that sponsors a center abroad must have very detailed and geographic-specific policies and procedures. In those instances information needs to be given both verbally (perhaps more than once) and in writing. Most experts recommend that the campus require students to sign a release that acknowledges receipt of the information and an agreement to abide by the stated standards. However, a part of identifying a quality program (approvability) is insuring that all of these issues are stated clearly and specifically.

Pre-departure, Reentry, Emergency Response Procedures, Health and Safety Standards

Even when students participate in a program that provides all instruction and support and the home institution merely provides permission and agrees to grant credit, there is an obligation to provide for these issues.

Pre-departure and reentry are vital and necessary parts of the entire experience. Study abroad should be considered as a process of preparing to go, studying abroad, returning to the campus. The process is not complete until the student applies the lessons learned abroad to their life in the U.S. Students and their families need to be prepared for the possibility of culture shock or (more commonly) reentry shock.

Health and safety issues must be stressed and repeated both by the home institution and by the program or foreign institution. Living in another culture, a student is not always aware of dangers or appropriate responses to those dangers. It is the clear responsibility of all parties involved in the study abroad experience to contribute to engendering a greater awareness and to providing as safe an environment as possible.

An emergency response process should be a part of any reputable program abroad. In addition, every campus should have a stated process of response that complements the on-campus policy while providing for the special circumstances abroad.

Earned Credit Issues

Once the student completes coursework abroad, depending on the type of study abroad program in place, there are a number of very important questions to consider regarding earned credit. Will credit be treated as

transfer credit? To what extent? For instance, a class taught by your own faculty that has passed through the same rigorous curricular approval process as other on-campus classes, but is physically offered in another country, might still be considered as "in residence" credit. Thus, credit earned at a "center" (that falls under the home-campus curricular approval process) might be treated as "in-residence" while individual classes taken at the foreign university with which the Center is affiliated are treated as transfer credit. Study abroad program administrators might consider special exceptions for study abroad credit that are not granted to other types of transfer credit. For instance, a requirement that the last 30 hours be done "in residence" might have a standing exception for study abroad credit. Also, consider the pass/fail policy as it applies to classes taken abroad. One very important consideration in instances where credit is reported directly from a foreign institution is the evaluation and interpretation of credit and grades in terms of U.S. equivalents. Who will evaluate foreign academic credentials? Will allowances be made for widely accepted differences between systems? (For instance, the French system uses a 0-20 grade scale. However, the highest grade given is 15. Will you reinterpret the scale taking this into account?)

Transcript Issues

What will be considered acceptable documentation? Must credit be reported on transcripts of U.S. accredited institutions in order to be acceptable? Many programs and foreign institutions provide for that option, but it usually entails an additional cost. If the U.S. institution provides none of the instruction or support, is the additional cost justified? On the other hand, some requirements for graduate and professional school must be reported on U.S. transcripts in order to meet entry requirements (for instance, premed classes for medical school applicants). Will you accept foreign transcripts or the certificates of completion from intensive language schools?

How will credit be recorded? Will grades appear or credit only? Some have argued (probably justifiably) that students apply themselves more intently when they know that the grades will appear on the transcript, even when those grades are not included in the GPA. Will class titles be included? Will they be translated? How will credit earned abroad be distinguished from other kinds of transfer credit? Will this credit be included or excluded when determining honors?

Credit and Course Approval Issues

You may require that all credit be pre-approved, or you may require that the student bring work back to the home institution for evaluation before credit is approved. You may grant only elective credit for work done abroad, or you could allow credit from abroad (where appropriate) to apply to major, minor, or other curricular requirements.

It is important to keep in mind that many foreign institutions do not post schedules until the beginning of term. It is impossible for students attending these institutions to know with any certainty in advance exactly what courses will be offered or what combination of courses will be possible. Course and credit approval processes should be flexible enough to provide for changes on-site. Even when students have courses pre-approved, advisors on-site may recommend changes based on a better understanding of the course content and prerequisites. Often a student's language level, as tested upon arrival, will determine which courses are appropriate. This can also necessitate a last-minute change. Even in the electronic age, approval processes need to provide enough flexibility to allow a student to respond appropriately and in a timely manner to the best guidance available. One possibility is to grant pre-approval for elective credit when permission to study in a particular program or institution is granted; then, to require more detailed course-by-course scrutiny for specific major or minor credit. Some considerations:

- Will credit be approved as elective credit only or will it be applied to specific requirements?
- At what point does that specific approval take place?
- Can a student have credit pre-approved or must the student submit the course for specific approval upon return?

- What documentation will be required?
- Who will grant approval for requirements and exceptions?
- Must a course abroad duplicate a similar course offered on campus or must it only meet the intent of the requirement?

Study Abroad Program Evaluation

When evaluating study abroad programs, both your own and those of others, the same areas should be scrutinized:

- Does the program set and maintain acceptable academic standards?
- Do the classes use the available site-specific resources? (What difference does it make if this class is taught abroad or on the home campus?)
- Is there adequate information and instruction on cross-cultural issues?
- What is the method of assessment?
- Who is providing the instruction?
- Are health and safety issues given adequate emphasis and provision?
- What is the quality of housing and other facilities?
- What academic resources are available?
- Is there an on-site presence or representative—someone with authority who can assist in an emergency?
- Are students adequately advised, both academically and in personal issues?
- Are orientation and reentry programs sufficient and specific?
- What emergency procedures are in place?

There are a number of sources of information available when attempting to answer these questions:

- *Program materials* (including web sites). How easy is the information to access? Is it complete? What information is not provided? Is the material misleading?
- *Program representatives.* Make time to talk with representatives who want to visit your campus. They should either be able to answer your questions or put you in contact with someone who can.
- *Student evaluations.* Returned students should be required to submit an evaluation of their experience abroad. When an evaluation raises a question, arrange to speak with the student in person and at length.
- *Site visits.* Ideally every program would be visited at least once every few years. There is no substitute for a first-hand personal review.
- *Faculty.* You may find that members of your own faculty have direct personal experience either with particular programs or with the geographic area and its educational system.
- *Colleagues.* Reputable programs will be able to give you the names of other institutions that have participated. Contact those advisors.
- *Professional organizations* such as NAFSA: The Association for International Educators may have professional listservs to which someone can submit a question or invite comment from a broad spectrum of advisors.

Financial Aid

Federal Regulations

It will surely not come as a surprise that federal regulations help to define parameters for study abroad and financial aid. As of December 31, 1997, Section 668.39 of the Student Financial Aid Regulations states:

> "A student enrolled in a program of study abroad is eligible to receive title IV HEA program assistance if—

(a) The student remains enrolled as a regular student in an eligible program at an eligible institution during his or her program of study abroad; and
(b) The eligible institution approves the program of study abroad for academic credit. However, the study abroad program need not be required as part of the student's eligible degree program."

This is the heart of the matter. No attempt will be made here to detail all the related issues. However, a brief overview of some of the information as it relates to study abroad programs is useful.

Types of Aid

In "The Practitioner's Guide to Financial Aid for Study Abroad" published in the *International Educator,* Nancy Stubbs defined financial aid as "any help that does not originate with the student or his or her family. Financial aid comes from federal and state governments; institutions of higher education; foundations; ethnic groups, clubs, religious groups, and associations; and private and public corporations."

There are four main types of financial aid:

a. Federal
b. State
c. Institutional
d. Private

Institutional Decisions Affecting Aid

Federal aid applicability is mandated by federal law as noted above. State aid is, of course, governed by state law. Privately funded aid is governed by the granting body. However, institutional decisions dictate that aid is administered differently even among institutions in the same state. There are differences between public and private institutions. There are differences decreed by the sheer size of the student body, or the layers of bureaucracy through which decisions must be passed. And there are differences based on what kinds of study abroad are approved for students on your campus. Many schools have a different policy for different types of programs. The chart below illustrates how financial aid policy may be applied differently in order to support institutional decisions on what model of study abroad experience that institution wants to encourage.

Aid Applicability

Program Type	Federal Aid	Institutional Aid
Exchanges	Yes	Yes
Institution's Own Programs	Yes	Yes
Affiliated Programs	Yes	No
Other U.S. Programs	Yes	No
Direct Enrollment	Yes	No

There are as many variations on this chart as there are schools. The home institution even has some control over the applicability of federal aid in that the study must be "approved." Some apply the same policy to a wide variety of "approved" programs. Others strictly limit institutional aid to their own centers or faculty-led programs.

Payment procedures may also differ by program type. For instance, at the same hypothetical institution used in the chart on the previous page:

Payment of Aid

Program Type	Payment to Host	Payment to Student
Exchanges	Remains at home institution	Remains at home institution
Institution's own programs	Remains at home institution	Remains at home institution
Affiliated programs	Yes	No
Other U.S. programs	Yes	No
Direct enrollment	No	Yes

Administrative Interrelationships

The Registrar, Financial Aid Officer, and Study Abroad Advisor must form a triangle of mutually cooperative supports in order for a campus to build a viable study abroad program. Each must understand the requirements and restrictions placed on the other and each must be prepared to provide information and documentation as necessary for the smooth functioning of all three areas of responsibility. As stated in the introduction, study abroad never fits neatly into a campus administration. Aid administration, along with issues relating to credit approval, is an area demanding the most intentional planning and cooperation. But that cannot happen unless individuals in these three offices are communicating with each other on a regular and consistent basis. Each office should appoint at least one individual with a primary responsibility for understanding the limits, demands, and procedures of the other two offices.

What You Should Know About

Study Abroad	Financial Aid	Registrar's Office
On-campus deadlines	Deadlines for FAFSA, profiles, and tax forms	Registration dates and procedures
Special payment or tuition arrangements/agreements	Applicable aid definition	Process for verification of status
Program aid availability	Awards schedule and release dates	How credit will be posted
Approval process	Policy concerning additional scholarships	Dates to file for graduation and degree audit

Many other items could be added to this chart, of course. Once some level of understanding is established, the process runs more smoothly if cooperative procedures are in place. Develop joint handouts so that information is consistent and accurate. Provide regular updates on information (which students are planning to go abroad in the next term, which ones have applicable aid, etc.). Share announcements on external scholarship opportunities, study options or interests, and pending legislation that may affect any of the three offices (along with chances to support favorable legislation). Finally, don't forget to say, "thanks," and be sure that supervisors are aware of extraordinary assistance and cooperation in time for annual evaluations.

Written Agreements

Recent changes in regulations have determined that separate "contractual" and "consortial" agreements are no longer necessary as long as an institution has a "written agreement" with all programs or foreign institutions providing (or acting as a liaison to provide) instruction to students participating in an approved study abroad experience.

Written agreements may be written for all students studying in a particular program or institution or for each individual student. Agreements should include the following information:

- designation of "host" and "home" institutions
- effective dates
- credit and enrollment status of the student
- confirmation that the student will remain enrolled at the home institution
- confirmation that federal aid will be administered by the home institution
- confirmation that credit earned by the student while attending the host institution will be accepted toward the student's degree at the home institution
- agreement by the host institution to provide a transcript or comparable official written record noting the student's performance in the program
- agreement that the host institution will promptly inform the home institution if the student withdraws, does not attend classes regularly, or reduces below the agreed enrollment status
- signatures from the appropriate authority at each institution

Disbursement questions

- Aid is disbursed no earlier than ten days before the start of term, but payment is usually due well in advance. How does a full-need student meet the financial obligation? In some instances a host institution will agree to wait for payment provided that the student or home institution provides a letter confirming aid amount and disbursal date.
- Many institutions prefer to pay such aid directly to the program or host institution. What happens when aid exceeds the amount due to the program or host institution? Is the difference mailed to the student, to a family member designated by the student, to the program for direct reimbursement to the student, or refunded to the student's account (from which a refund may be requested)? Reimbursement arrangements should be determined and clearly stated to the student in advance.
- What happens if aid checks need to be signed after students have already gone abroad? Mailing such checks abroad is not only time-consuming, it is also undependable. Even checks sent using international express mail services may take several weeks to be delivered, and then it must be returned. Such services are expensive, and not all services provide delivery to all geographic areas. Many institutions request students to leave a limited power of attorney to cover this contingency so that funds may be disbursed immediately.

Additionally, arrangements must be made so that aid applications, profiles, and tax forms are processed on schedule in the student's absence, taking into account possible delays in international mail.

Legal Issues in Study Abroad

As our society grows ever more litigious, those of us involved in the field of study abroad have come to be more and more concerned about the possibility of being sued. Legal issues in this field span a wide variety of circumstances including representations in the program literature, admission procedures, the health and safety of students while overseas, student misbehavior and appropriate discipline, academic issues such as misunderstandings over the nature of the academic program, disagreements over what is included in the program fee, and housing complaints. This list is hardly all-inclusive as unanticipated problems frequently emerge.

Those administering study abroad programs and those merely advising students who participate in other institutions' programs tend to worry about potential risks and seek ways to prepare and protect themselves, their institutional colleagues, and their students for the unexpected. It is important for a good program administrator or advisor to function as a sort of risk manager and to have access to excellent advice regarding the management of risks.

All aspects of the study abroad program must be examined carefully to note areas of potential risk to the student, the advisor, the administrators, and the sponsoring institution. A wise administrator leaves nothing to chance. The risks must be identified and solutions for eliminating or reducing the potential for harm must be found.

Analysis of the risks should begin with this question: "What could possibly go wrong?" By considering all possible scenarios and interposing this question at every stage of the program planning and advising process, literally hundreds of hypothetical situations will come to mind. Those of greatest potential risk should be addressed first and the others should follow in order of decreasing importance. Avenues for dealing with each hypothetical situation should be laid out, identifying all key actors who might play a role in reacting to and ameliorating each situation should the need arise. Strategic checklists should be formulated and circulated to all key administrators so that they will fully understand the roles that may be required of them in the event that something does indeed go wrong. The need for comprehensive planning for dealing with all foreseeable problems cannot be overemphasized.

Health and Safety Issues

The primary area of concern should focus first and foremost on the health and safety of students engaging in study abroad programs. This includes dealing with crisis management issues and also medical issues which may be linked to students' own pre-existing conditions or behavior.

While crisis management situations may occur in any location, the risks may be greater in certain parts of the world. All of us are at the mercy of the so-called "act of God" situations, e.g., earthquakes, floods, airline crashes. It is difficult to prepare for such unexpected events, but there should be a properly delineated master plan laid out and known to all program administrators for responding to such a situation in the unlikely event that it should occur. Such things as who notifies whom at each juncture, who deals with medical personnel, who deals with the press, who speaks with parents, who deals with repatriation of remains should the event be of such magnitude that death of students occurs, and a wide variety of other tasks need to be addressed and spelled out in the master plan.

Risk Disclosure

Full disclosure of the risks is a necessity in all cases, and it is especially crucial when a study abroad program is based in an area prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods. The risks may be managed to a certain extent through the use of "assumption of the risk" clauses in documents which participants might be asked to sign, signifying that they have been fully informed and will not hold the program administrators or institution liable under the adverse circumstances that could arise. In the case of institutional liability, the question will always arise after the fact as to what the program administrators should have known and whether or not they adequately conveyed that information to program participants so that participants could make the final determination as to whether or not they wished to assume those risks.

Students' Personal Health Issues

Another area of concern involves students' personal health issues. All students should be covered by health insurance while they are abroad. Some programs provide coverage for all student participants, but many expect the student to provide his/her own coverage. In the case of direct enrollment in a foreign institution, health insurance is often obligatory. It is the program administrator's duty to advise the student of the necessity for health coverage and to ascertain that such coverage is in effect during the program dates. Before

purchasing health insurance, students should review the insurance that covers them in the United States as some policies may also cover them overseas. Also, in some countries, students are covered by national health plans (e.g., full-year students in Great Britain) or they may be required to purchase national health coverage plans (e.g., all students studying in Australia). More often than not, however, they will need to purchase supplemental insurance that will cover them while abroad.

There are many companies that specialize in health insurance for study abroad students so the student need only investigate the choices and select one, providing proof of coverage to the program administrator. Frequently, this proof will be required to obtain the visa or by immigration officials when a student enters the foreign country for the study abroad experience. Even more important than health insurance in some instances is that the student be forthcoming and let the overseas program director know of any specific pre-existing health conditions so that appropriate assistance can more easily be made available should the need arise unexpectedly.

Students' Life Choices

Another factor to be considered deals with the student's own life choices, i.e., his or her behavior while abroad. A proper orientation program should apprise him or her of the consequences of drug or alcohol usage or abuse in the host country. In many cases the age limits for alcohol usage in the foreign location are lower than those in the United States so a student may find himself or herself in a venue where there are greater temptations than at home. Despite the legal age requirement, many programs have a no-alcohol policy for events officially sponsored by the program.

The student's choices may cause new physical or emotional problems and may contribute to health problems during the study abroad experience. Program administrators need to determine whether or not they are going to set limits on students' behavior and they must clearly communicate whatever rules they devise to the students. These guidelines will not only be helpful to the student participants, but they will lessen the risk of liability on the part of sponsoring the institution should a student's own behavior cause him or her harm or illness while participating in the study abroad program.

Institutional Liability

While most study abroad program administrators are genuinely concerned about the health and safety of the students, as they should be, they also need to be concerned about their own welfare and the well-being of their institution. Some would like to see the institution in a role akin to "in loco parentis" vis-a-vis the students on a study abroad program, but, as yet, that claim has not been played out to a convincing level in a court of law. How much of a duty institutions and their administrators owe to students is a debatable topic and there is not yet a solid body of law dealing with these issues. U.S. law tends to rely heavily on the doctrine of "stare decisis," i.e., looking to previous court decisions for legal precedent.

Since study abroad is a relatively modern concept, its history is fairly limited and, fortunately for all of us in this field, not especially marked by serious conflict and lawsuits. However, the down side of this is that because we are dealing with relatively virgin territory in most instances, there is not a great deal of legal precedent outlining our legal duties and describing how we might be treated in a court of law should a student or parents sue under a specific set of adverse circumstances. The best preparation is what might be called over-preparation. Institutions and their administrators should strive to become familiar with how the legal system operates and to consider the extent to which any of the institution's program administrators could possibly be held liable for their actions or omissions. Following completion of this assessment, steps can be taken to educate staff members and to make certain that they act responsibly and in accordance with perceived legal duties. It is worthy of note that when there is no case law pertinent to a specific study abroad incident or situation, courts will very likely look to the next best thing—U.S. higher education law.

There are three main areas of law that might have a bearing on institutional liability: (a) federal law, (b) contract law, and (c) tort law.

Federal law is probably the easiest to deal with because the duties of various individuals under specific circumstances have been analyzed by legislators who have achieved consensus as to what should be the responsibilities of individuals acting within these specific areas. Since the situations and duties are fairly clearly defined, institutions can note their responsibilities with relative ease and take steps to educate their employees to act within the confines of the law. The problem with these laws in terms of study abroad is that they were intended to cover broader issues and the extent of their relevance and significance for the study abroad field is not yet well-defined. Consequently, those in the study abroad field cannot as yet be completely certain of their specific obligations.

One of the federal acts that may have a bearing on study abroad is the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Buckley Amendment. As in other areas of higher education, study abroad advisors and administrators grapple with the privacy rights of students and their parents' desire to be informed when problems arise. While its specific relevance is yet undetermined in the study abroad field, another act known as the Clery Act (Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act) may come into play in the realm of providing a safe environment for students participating in overseas study programs.

Another primary area of federal law that study abroad advisors and administrators are focusing on now is the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). It is not yet clear to what extent this law applies to study abroad, but most advisors and administrators are attempting to bring their programs into compliance by making study abroad more accessible for students with disabilities. They are reviewing what modifications can be effected in overseas classrooms, housing, transportation, and other items so that more students with disabilities will be able to participate. Reasonable accommodation is the key here. While a study abroad program cannot change the structure of an historic building in Europe, it may be able to make a simple improvement that will render the building more accessible for a student in a wheelchair, without sacrificing the academic value of the experience for others on the program. For example, it may be possible to install a ramp for wheelchair access or a sturdy rail in a bathtub or shower area for safety and better accessibility. While study abroad programs may have to factor in some additional finances to effect accommodation, they are not expected to do this to an extent that would be financially incapacitating. Mobility International offers some valuable and useful information about the requirements of the ADA and how it impacts study abroad. Mobility International can be reached at www.miusa.org.

Contract law provides an institution with far more control because it makes it possible for the institution to take charge of the situation and limit its liability to a rather large extent via carefully drafted agreements.

Tort law remains the largest unknown variable because it deals with the relatively unpredictable area of human behavior, including not just intentional acts, but the much greater area of potential employee negligence. Their mistakes or perceived mistakes can sometimes lead to extremely large sums of money being paid by an organization to victims who are able to prove that an institution had a legal duty to them which was breached.

What This Means In Terms Of Study Abroad

We are dealing here primarily with unexpected issues and, therefore, there are no hard and fast rules. However, the more we anticipate the unexpected and create contingency plans for dealing with it, the more likely it is that we will be able to protect students from harm and our institutions from the threat of lawsuits. A court of law will generally look to what the hypothetical "reasonable person" would have done under the circumstances. Therefore, the prudent course is to make certain that all staff members understand the importance of behaving in a reasonable manner at every step of the process and this includes fully documenting each and every contact with all individuals and entities involved with the study abroad program from the time of its inception, through the admissions procedures, the orientation, the actual academic program, and the final crediting process.

All agreements with service providers should be documented in detailed language in carefully drafted contracts signed by all parties. This includes agreements between U.S. colleges and foreign institutions, agencies providing specific services, housing providers, transport companies, etc.

It is important to note that promotional literature falls into the contract category. While it is one of the most controllable areas in terms of risk management, it is also one of the areas in which many programs fall down. Brochures, advertisements, and other promotional items must be clear and unambiguous and should not promise more than the program can deliver. It is worthy of note that in legal contests, ambiguous language will usually be construed against the party who wrote it. It is important to include all program costs in the literature and even more important to include a listing of what is not covered. Any potential risks or dangers should be spelled out. Pre-departure and planning materials given to students should include health and safety information. These items should also identify which activities are specifically program activities and which are considered non-program activities (e.g., living and traveling independently of the program on weekends). Program participants should be fully informed of all foreseeable risks and should be asked to sign releases and disclaimers (parents should sign for students who are minors) so as to shift the risk to some extent. It is not possible for a program to fully shift the risk, but reasonable risk can be expected to be assumed by informed participants through such contracts.

A thorough orientation program is a must and should include distribution of written copies of all rules and regulations, policies, and procedures regarding student behavior on the program.

When dealing with overseas service providers, the U.S. institution must learn as much about them as possible in order to avoid being held negligent later. For example, there is no excuse for not investigating the safety record of a bus company which is used to transport program students. Contracts should be carefully drafted showing exactly who is responsible for every aspect of the program or service. Also, program administrators should try to get a clause in the contract stating that the agency providing the service will reimburse or indemnify the U.S. college should it be sued.

Protective clauses such as the "choice of forum" should be used as it will generally be more advantageous, both financially and strategically, to defend a lawsuit in the college's home state. Without such a clause, a plaintiff might be able to sue overseas or in his home state. It is wise to include also a "choice of law" clause. Laws vary widely from state to state and country to country. No matter where the lawsuit is brought, the law of the state specified in the contract will be used. Not including such a clause leaves much to chance. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of an "alternative dispute resolution" clause. These can be very useful as arbitration and mediation tend to lead to far less costly and generally speedier resolution of lawsuits as well as disagreements of a lesser nature.

There are many other instances where an institution can make good use of contract law to limit its liability. Unfortunately, the behavior of an institution's administrators does not fall into this category. It is far less predictable and not governable by contract law. As negligence or the intentional acts of an institution's employees may lead to tort suits against the institution, it is very important that institutions focus on trying to get employees to act predictably and reasonably in all dealings with students and other individuals in the chain of events. In these circumstances, staff education is the best protection. Study abroad advisors and administrators should be made aware of the fact that any negligent act or omission on their part could result in a lawsuit being brought against them and their institution. It is important that everyone realize that anyone can be sued and it is expensive to defend oneself even if one is not at fault. The best defense is to take all steps possible to minimize the risk of being sued. This means that advisors and administrators need to know their programs well and convey all pertinent information to students clearly. Additionally, they should take pains to record all verbal transactions in written form.

Liability of Study Abroad Advisors

While institutions generally have in-house counsel to protect and defend them in the event of a lawsuit, it is important for study abroad advisors to realize that this does not necessarily protect them as individuals. Early on, they should confer with their institution's legal counsel to make certain that they will be fully supported by the institution. They should keep superiors informed at all stages of the study abroad advising process and also make certain that all pertinent conversations with students, parents, and others are fully documented in writing. Advisors obviously need to be extremely knowledgeable about their institution's study abroad programs as well as any others they might endorse or promote to students, being careful to convey only correct information to students and others. Advisors should not make comments about other programs that might leave them open to claims of defamation or restraint of trade. It is generally permissible to discuss negative features of programs, but only if relevant and based on objective and sufficient evidence. The prudent course is to carefully consider all possible consequences of one's words or actions before speaking out.

Finally, when institutions run their own study abroad programs, it is important to ascertain that their faculty and administrators are covered by liability insurance while abroad. Sometimes there are unforeseen loopholes. Each situation must be assessed individually. Even if a person is covered by an umbrella policy worldwide, it may still be worthwhile to take out the extra protection of covering him or her specifically in the country of the study abroad program.

Risk Management Audit

It is important for study abroad advisors to carry out an audit of their risk management liabilities with other campus officials concerned with these issues, e.g., campus legal counsel, risk manager, student welfare officer, student services officer, insurance manager. These audits should be carried out periodically, perhaps once a year, to insure that all contingencies are being covered concerning students studying abroad. It is also important for advisors to utilize these on-campus resources any time an emergency occurs. No advisor should be asked to bear the full burden of risk or legal liability on his or her own shoulders.

A Final Note

It is not the goal of this chapter to make college and university faculty and administrators worry unnecessarily about the possibility of lawsuits, but rather to highlight some of the potential problem areas so that they will see the wisdom of thorough planning and take all the necessary steps to protect themselves and their institutions. This knowledge and preparation should assist those involved in study abroad to become relatively free of the fear of legal difficulties.

There are many resources available to assist those involved with study abroad issues. Space does not permit mentioning all of them here, but it would be worthwhile to check the following web sites, which list numerous additional web sites and helpful resources:

- http://www.oldsite.nafsa.org/safetyabroad/resources.html
- http://travel.state.gov/travel
- http://www.miusa.org

As more and more U.S. students study abroad, and more and more institutions become involved in providing programming and support for them, questions will continue to arise concerning what is the "right" thing to do, what is the "best" way to accomplish this? The bad news is that there are probably as many different answers as there are different questions. The good news is that there is ample precedent for good quality programs of many different designs, so that each campus can create a program suited to the individual institution's mission and character.

CHAPTER 14

Professional Development: Expanding Your International Horizon

International admission will provide opportunities that may not be realized in many other professions. Some consider the field rather esoteric and are happy that someone takes care of that part of the admission work. Others see international admission as a career. International admission exposes you to information about other countries, the cultures, the educational systems of the world, and allows for the possibilities of influencing the future of many very qualified people. It can also lead you to a very rewarding career where you build many skills, if you expose yourself to the larger context of your job and manage your career.

International admission is part of the admission profession at large and cannot be divorced from it. Admission work, in general, requires a combination of many skills and a huge amount of knowledge. Required skills include:

- leadership
- human relations
- management
- counseling
- marketing
- fiscal
- presentation
- public relations
- conflict resolution
- writing
- information systems
- analysis

The admission knowledge base includes:

- understanding the U.S. educational system
- U.S. admission practices
- grade and transfer policies
- institutional undergraduate, graduate, and transfer admission policy and practices including credential evaluation and grading practices
- institutional academic policy and practice
- registration and financial aid policy
- immigration service policy and practice
- institutional fiscal, human resources, management, and travel policies

It will take several years for you to acquire this knowledge base and even longer to hone the skills. How much and how fast you learn may be directly related to the office in which you work, its leadership (your mentor), and the amount of effort you invest in yourself.

International admission, nested within this huge profession, requires all the above mentioned skills, but in addition requires the acquisition of a huge knowledge base about education in other countries. It is a knowledge base that one will never master in its entirety. Even the most mature professionals acknowledge that they learn something new every day on the job. Learning is driven by the cases that come across ones desk and every person in the field gets a different combination of cases in their work. You will learn things in your work that others do not know and they will learn things you do not know.

Skills Assessment

Consider yourself a work in progress. No one is born with all the skills they need to be successful in life. Those smart enough to accumulate skills early in life will probably progress faster. Admission is very

dynamic and if you like the profession generally, you can find many opportunities to grow within the profession.

Start with a self-assessment. Use the professional development self-survey at the end of this chapter. It will help you to look at yourself in the larger picture of the admission profession noted above and figure out where you are now and what you need to learn as you work, and how to expand your competencies so that you are ready for the next opportunity. Seek activities related to your work that allow you to develop the skills you do not have. For example, if you do not have budget responsibility, offer to assist your boss with the development of the office budget in order to learn how budget priorities are made. If you have never given a presentation to a group, other than to students, offer to make a presentation to your peers (your toughest critics) at a staff meeting or at a committee meeting on your campus. Recognize that you may not be perfect the first time through, but learn from your mistakes. Ask for feedback on your work.

Once you have identified your skills and know on what you need to work, figure out a way to start to develop those skills.

Self Education—Investing In Yourself

Skill Development

Statistics show that the average employee will change careers two or three times in a lifetime. Understanding your skill base will help you feel confident about what you can do and what skills are transferable.

Whose responsibility is it to train you and help you secure those competencies? Is it your employers' responsibility or your own responsibility to gain the knowledge and skills you need to do your job? If you say it's the responsibility of someone else, you will not progress very fast nor will you feel very satisfied. Just as it has been your responsibility to learn up to the point of employment, it is your responsibility now to manage your own continuing education in this or any other profession you may pursue. Your stature in the field will grow in direct proportion to the effort you put into building your own knowledgebase. Too often we hear "My university will not pay for X class." If your university will not pay for a class that you need, perhaps you should pay for it yourself. Or, at minimum, buy a book that will give you some of the knowledge. Don't wait. *Invest in yourself.*

Develop Your Own Professional Library

In the admission and international admission fields, professional publications often go out of print. Consider developing your own professional library. As you buy books for the institutional library, buy a duplicate set of books for yourself. If you plan to grow in the profession, you may move to another institution where attention has not been paid to the library resources. If you have your own library, you will be able to do your work wherever you are. Because of the rate at which books are published, you will only have to buy fewer than ten books per year—which is a small investment in your own future—and certainly fewer books than you ask your students to buy for their education each year. (See Appendix B—Publications and Other Useful Resources.)

Part of your "library" will be a notebook of information that you gather from e-mails, the internet, conference presentations, phone calls to colleagues, papers supplied by students, and so on. Early in your career, figure out a filing system for yourself and for the office for the information that accumulates, that is not published, per se, and file it in a manner that allows you to find it again. You will be surprised at the amount of factual knowledge you accumulate in a year's time. Most professionals file by country or by country within a continent.

Build Your Resume

Building your resume is part of developing your own education plan. The resume is really an accounting of your career, qualifications, skills, and accomplishments.

Think about a balanced resume. As you develop your own knowledgebase, you will make contributions to the field through presentations at conferences, writing, solving policy problems with your colleagues, providing leadership on committees or in organizations. Each time you take a step forward in your skill and knowledge gathering, you can expand your resume.

To balance your resume, think about the knowledge you are accumulating. Many admission officers learn pieces of the international admission knowledgebase, for example, by becoming the South American or the China specialist in the office. Keep track of what you are learning in your work, what you have mastered, and what you have yet to accomplish. Seek or accept assignments that will round out your knowledgebase. On your resume, you can list countries about which you are knowledgeable, presentations you have made, and so forth.

When you are just getting started, volunteer to do a presentation first for other staff on your campus, then at a regional conference. Write a simple article about something new that you have learned while doing your research or a blurb for a professional newsletter. Volunteer to join a committee on campus, then at the regional level, and finally at the national level. Keep track of all of these activities for your resume.

In addition to building your resume, through these activities you will get to know others in the profession and will soon be asked to participate on advisory boards and policy making committees.

Develop a Personal Network of Colleagues

In the international admission business, your most valuable learning resource is a network of colleagues. Remember that they started where you are starting so they have a considerable amount of valuable timesaving advice to offer and can be invaluable to you when you are getting started. Do your homework first. Research everything you can to solve your own problem (university library, internet, colleagues on campus, a faculty member, other students from that country, etc.) and when you reach a dead-end and have no solution, call a colleague at a university nearby.

When first starting out in the profession you would profit from a visit to another college or university, particularly if you are a "one person show." Spend a couple of months on the job, accumulate some questions, and then arrange to do a short one- or two-day internship in a larger office. This will help you solidify some procedures, learn shortcuts, focus your learning, and help you realize you are not alone.

Don't Be Afraid of Mistakes

If you are very careful you will probably not make any mistakes in the international admission field, but that is hard to do. Most mature professionals will share with you a mistake or two they made along they way. In fact, we often learn our best lessons from the mistakes we make. If you do make a mistake, be sure to tell your boss about it, in case there are some unexpected repercussions. The mistake may be applicable to several students' admission cases, but if you know you made the mistake on one case, learn from it and try not to make the same mistake again. Tell the other students that a "lucky" mistake was made in favor of one student, but that it was a mistake and that you cannot make it again. Students respect honest and forthright treatment and they will generally respect you for correcting the mistake, even if they do not benefit. If a mistake is made that is detrimental to a student, you should be happy to correct it, making clear notes in the file as to the chronology of the events and the source of information that caused you to change your mind.

Professional Organizations To Which You Should Belong and Why

Joining a professional organization is an excellent opportunity to expand your professional development. There are a number of organizations composed of colleagues in the field of international education. Two of the largest are mentioned on the following page.

AACRAO

The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, located in Washington DC, is a membership organization and has long been a leader in providing research on foreign educational systems. In the early 1990s, AACRAO combined forces with NAFSA and the College Board to jointly pursue a research agenda by establishing the joint committee on Projects for International Education Research (PIER). PIER sponsors research, done by professionals like yourself, on countries where education is changing, to help you keep abreast of your field.

In addition to co-sponsoring PIER, AACRAO has an active agenda of following current issues and events, study abroad, and admission topics, many of which will be presented at the annual national conference.

All international activities of AACRAO are coordinated by the Vice President for International Education. More information can be obtained about the AACRAO international publications and current issues through the AACRAO web site (www.AACRAO.org).

NAFSA

NAFSA: Association of International Educators, located in Washington DC, is a major professional membership organization for international educators. Membership includes professionals in international student advising, study abroad, international admission, teachers of English as a foreign language, overseas advisors, and many others.

The admission section team (ADSEC) comprises members from the field and is responsible for professional training programs, conference programs, current events, and issues and general admission business for the field.

NAFSA distributes a regular electronic newsletter to members to keep them abreast of legislative issues, particularly immigration regulations, and general information of interest to internationalists. NAFSA also publishes a professional journal called the *International Educator*.

Members of NAFSA maintain listservs on various topics. Information about joining the listservs can be obtained on the NAFSA web site (www.NAFSA.org).

Professional Development Benefits

There are a number of professional development benefits that can be derived from joining a professional organization:

- *Networking.* Professional organizations offer an excellent opportunity to network with your colleagues. Whether electronically via a listserv or face-to-face at a local, regional, or national conference, these organizations allow colleagues to meet and share ideas, seek solutions to common problems, and have fun!
- *Training.* Training opportunities are an important component of professional organizations and they are available in a number of ways. Local, regional and national conferences offer workshops and sessions covering the latest topics in the field. In addition, organizations will usually offer specialized training programs covering one or several topics. Taking advantage of these training opportunities will put you "in the know" on the most important topics in the field, positioning you to advance in your career.
- *Resources.* If you visit the web site of a professional organization, you will see a useful selection of resources. These include listservs, job postings, and publications. In addition, links will be included that will further expand your access to important resources in the field. The collective experience and professionalism of your colleagues is a powerful resource that can contribute to your own professional growth and development.

- *Involvement.* One of the best features of a professional organization is the opportunity for involvement. These organizations are composed of their members and there is always an opportunity for involvement. Whether you volunteer your time at a conference, join a committee, or give a presentation, involvement in professional endeavors is an important component of your professional development and a great boost for your career.

DO-IT-YOURSELF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SELF-SURVEY

by Gary Althen
Director, Office of International Students and Scholars, The University of Iowa

Inventory of Current Professional Development Activities

1. List the periodic publications related to your field that you know about. After you have done that, draw a *circle* around the titles of the publications you read regularly, and a *square* around the titles of the publications read from time to time.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. How many professional conferences have you attended in the past year?

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What professional organizations do you belong to?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Within the past two years have you:

   (a) held any office in any professional organization? YES NO

   (b) attended any professional development workshop? YES NO

   (c) written any articles for publication? YES NO

   (d) planned any workshop or conference session? YES NO

   (e) traveled abroad other than as a tourist? YES NO

   (f) conducted any studies related to educational exchange? YES NO

   (g) taken any course related to your work? YES NO

5. Name two books related to your work that you have read during the past six months.

   a. _____

   b. _____

6. Name two books related to your work that are on your to-read list or on your to-read pile.

   a. _____

   b. _____

Skills Rating

Use a check mark to show whether you consider your level of skill with respect to each item to be low, medium, or high.

	Low	Medium	High
1. Using work time efficiently	____	____	____
2. Writing clear letters and memos	____	____	____
3. Explaining things clearly when talking	____	____	____
4. Giving clear instructions	____	____	____
5. Making public presentations	____	____	____
6. Keeping accurate records	____	____	____
7. Listening to others, hearing not just the words but the underlying feelings	____	____	____
8. Motivating subordinates to perform well	____	____	____
9. Working constructively with your boss	____	____	____
10. Planning: setting objectives and assessing your progress towards them	____	____	____
11. Setting priorities	____	____	____
12. Withholding judgment about other people's values	____	____	____
13. Making decisions	____	____	____
14. Implementing decisions	____	____	____
15. Avoiding procrastination	____	____	____
16. Conducting lively, fruitful meetings	____	____	____
17. Networking	____	____	____

Knowledge Rating

On the back of this sheet, list the five subject matter areas you think it is most important for people in your area of specialization to know about. Then indicate whether your own level of knowledge in each of these five areas is low, medium, or high.

Professional Development Plan

Look over your ratings of your knowledge and skills. Mark the two skills and the two areas of knowledge in which you think it is most important for you to improve. Write your selections here:

Skills: a. _____

b. _____

Knowledge: a. _____

b. _____

List at least two (three or four would be better) ways in which you could improve in the areas you have just listed.

Skill (a)	Skill (b)	Knowledge (a)	Knowledge (b)

In each of the four columns above, *circle* two activities to which you could realistically commit yourself between now and the end of the calendar year.

Write down the two professional development activities you have decided you could begin by the end of the current academic period. Beside each of them write down the *first step* you would have to take to start that activity (for example, check a book out of the library, get information about registering for a course). Then write down the date by which you plan to take each of those first steps.

	Activity	First Step	Date
a.			
b.			

APPENDIX A

Resource Organizations, Agencies, and Institutions

This list is just to get you started. You may want to start your own list as you find ones that are not listed here.

Africa America Institute (AAI)
833 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 949-5666
Fax: (212) 682-6174

Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange
1090 Vermont Avenue, NW, Suite 720
Washington, DC 200005
Tel: (202) 371-2070
Fax: (202) 371-2190
URL: http://www.alliance-exchange.org/

America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. (AMIDEAST)
1730 M Street, N.W., Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036-4505
Tel: (202) 776-9600
Fax: (202) 776-7000
E-mail: inquiries@amideast.org
URL: http://www.amideast.org/

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) Office of International Education Services
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520
Washington, DC 20036-1135
Tel: (202) 293-9161
Fax: (202) 872-8857
URL: http://www.aacrao.org/international/index.htm

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
One Dupont Circle, Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 728-0200
Fax: (202)833-2467
URL: http://www.aacc.nche.edu/

American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)
1307 New York Avenue, N.W., Fifth Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005-4701
Tel: (202) 293-7070
Fax: (202) 296-5819
URL: http://www.aascu.org/

American Council on Education (ACE)
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800
Tel: (202) 939-9300
Fax: (202) 833-4760
URL: http://www.acenet.edu/

American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS)
River Plaza, 9 West Broad Street
Stamford, CT 06902-3788
Tel: 800-727-AIFS (2437)
E-mail: info@aifs.com
URL: http://www.aifs.org/

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU)
1818 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
E-mail: info@aacu.nw.dc.us
URL: http://www.aacu-edu.org/

Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)
200-1223 rue Michael Street Nord/North
Ottawa, Ontario K1J 7T2
Canada
Tel: (613) 746-2222
Fax: (613) 746-6721
URL: http://www.accc.ca/

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC)
350 Albert Street, suite 600
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 1B1
Canada
Tel: (613) 563-1236
Fax: (613) 563-9745
E-mail: info@aucc.ca
URL: http://www.aucc.ca/index.html

The College Board: Educational Excellence for All Students
45 Columbus Avenue
New York, NY 10023-6992
Tel: (212) 713-8000
URL: http://www.collegeboard.org/

The College Board: International Education
1233 20th St. NW, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 822-5900
Fax: (202)822-5234
E-mail: Internatl@collegeboard.org

Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)
3600 Market Street, Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19104-2651
Tel: (215) 222-8454
Fax: (215) 662-0425
Telex: 402409 CGFNS PHA
E-mail: info@cgfns.org
URL: http://www.cgfns.org/cgfns/proto/index.html

Council of Graduate Schools (CGS)
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 430
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 223-3791
Fax: (202) 331-7157
URL: http://www.cgsnet.org/

Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)
URL: http://www.ciee.org/

CIES: Council for International Exchange of Scholars
3007 Tilden Street NW Suite 5L
Washington DC 20008-3009
Tel: (202) 686-4000
Fax: (202) 362-3442
URL: http://www.iie.org/cies/

Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Rosedale Road
Princeton, NJ 08541
Tel: (609) 921-9000
Fax: (609) 734-5410
E-mail: etsinfo@ets.org
URL: http://www.ets.org/

ERIC—Clearing House on Higher Education
One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 630
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (800) 773-3742
Fax: (202) 452-1844
URL: http://www.eriche.org/main.html

European Association for International Education (EAIE)
PO Box 11189, 1001 GD Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +31-20-525 4999
Fax: +31-20-525 4998
E-mail: eaie@eaie.nl
URL: http://www.eaie.nl/

The International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX)
1616 H Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
Tel: (202) 628-8188
Fax: (202) 628-8189
E-mail: irex@irex.org
URL: http://www.irex.org/

Institute of International Education (IIE)
809 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212) 883-8200
Fax: (212) 984-5452
E-mail: info@iie.org
URL: http://www.iie.org/

LASPAU: Academic and Professional Programs for the Americas
25 Mt. Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138-6095
Tel: (617) 495-5255
Fax: (617) 495-8990
E-mail: laspau-webmaster@camail1.harvard.edu
URL: http://www.laspau.harvard.edu/

Linden Educational Services
2802 Cathedral Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008
Tel: (202) 232-4606
Fax: (202) 232-4608
E-mail: linden@lindentours.com
URL: http://www.lindentours.com/

NAFSA: Association of International Educators
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Eighth Floor
Washington, DC 20005-4701
Tel: (202) 737-3699
Fax: (202) 737-3657
E-mail: inbox@nafsa.org
URL: http://www.nafsa.org/

National Association of Credential Evaluators (NACES)
E-mail: naces@ierf.org
URL: http://www.naces.org/

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202-0498
Tel: 1-800-USA-LEARN
E-mail: CustomerService@inet.ed.gov
URL: http://www.ed.gov/

APPENDIX B

Publications and Other Useful Resources

Publications

A. General

Commonwealth Universities Yearbook. A comprehensive guide to higher education throughout the English-speaking world, excluding the U.S. The very latest information available on over 600 universities in 36 countries or regions of the Commonwealth. Information includes undergraduate and graduate courses; requirements for admission and degrees; full postal address; telephone, telex and fax numbers; e-mail and cable addresses; e-mail formula; World Wide Web URLs; full faculty listings; administrative contact officers; program offerings and an index that includes exchange programs established with universities in other countries, including the U.S. Published annually. Available through Grove's Dictionaries Inc., PO Box 2244, Williston, VT 05495, Tel: 800-972-9892, Fax: 802-864-7626; e-mail: echmilowski@grovereference.com.

F-1 Regulations for Beginners. 1998. Originally written for new foreign student advisers in Region VIII, the F-1 guide is designed for Designated School Officials (DSOs) as a complement to the NAFSA Adviser's Manual and as a quick reference for the many F-1 procedures. The guide provides step-by-step information on how to complete forms and which forms are needed for the various applications. Each procedure is followed by an example of a completed form using generally accepted styles. A list of resources on immigration regulations and information on ordering forms are included. Available through NAFSA.

Foreign Educational Credentials Required for Consideration of Admission to Universities and Colleges in the U.S. Prepared by AACRAO for the Agency of International Development. The minimum educational credentials which should be available for applicants from more than 210 educational systems are identified in convenient and consistent form. Available through AACRAO.

A Guide to Educational Systems Around the World. 1999. This long-awaited revision of NAFSA's popular 1990 title, Handbook on the Placement of Foreign Graduate Students, covers secondary as well as higher education. Editor Shelley Feagles of Educational Credential Evaluators has compiled information on the educational systems of more than 156 countries, from Albania to Zimbabwe. Articles on the new methodology of credential evaluation, interpreting foreign grades, and using the Internet as a research tool provide useful background information for the novice or experienced admissions professional. Available through NAFSA.

International Academic Credentials Handbook, Volume I. 1988. Looseleaf. Summarizes benchmark academic credentials of Australia, Ecuador, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Italy, Kenya, Lebannon, Mexico, People's Republic of China, Philippines, Switzerland, Taiwan, and Tanzania, with sample credentials and placement recommendations. Available through AACRAO.

International Academic Credentials Handbook, Volume II. 1989. Looseleaf. Summarizes benchmark academic credentials of Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cyprus, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, Indonesia, Jordan, Panama, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe, with sample credentials and placement recommendations. Available through AACRAO.

International Academic Credentials Handbook, Volume III. 1992. Looseleaf. Summarizes benchmark academic credentials of Commonwealth of Independent States, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Spain, Thailand, and Turkey, with sample credentials and placement recommendations. Indices for volumes I, II, and III. Available through AACRAO.

International Handbook of Universities. Compiled by the International Association of Universities. Information on over 5,700 university level institutions in 171 countries worldwide. Information includes full address details, names of key personnel, a general description of the institution, full description of academic divisions with number of staff and students per faculty, information on fees, degrees and diplomas offered, academic year dates and links with other universities. Available through Grove's Dictionaries Inc.

The World Academic Database (2000) on CD-ROM is a combination of the International Handbook of Universities and the World List of Universities, and includes additional information not found in either of the print directories. Search for information on nearly 14,000 higher education institutions in over 180 countries. It is available through AACRAO.

World List of Universities. Compiled by the International Association of Universities. Provides quick access to information on over 11,000 universities, other institutions of higher education, and university organizations world-wide, including the U.S. and Canada. Available through Grove's Dictionaries Inc.

B. Single Country Volumes

The *Country Guides* provide data on the educational systems of more than 30 lesser-known countries, ranging from Afghanistan to Zambia. Each monograph includes a narrative description of the country and its educational system, a flow chart of most-frequently-awarded educational credentials required for consideration at U.S. schools, as well as such specific information as detailed grading scales, sample credentials, and a complete bibliography.

Afghanistan 1995
Burundi 1995
Cameroon 1995
Cape Verde 1995
Central African Republic 1995
Chad 1995
Congo 1996
Cote d-Ivoire (Ivory Coast) 1995
Gabon 2000
The Gambia 2000
Guinea 2000
Jordan 2000
Malawi 2000
Mauritania 2000
Mozambique 2000
The Republic of Niger 1996
Pacific Islands 1996
Rwanda 1995
Senegal 2000
Seychelles
Sudan 1996
Tanzania 1996
Tunisia 2000
Yemen 2000
Zaire 1996
Zambia 1996

World Education Series/PIER. A series sponsored originally by AACRAO and now published by the Projects for International Education Research (PIER) Committee of AACRAO/NAFSA and The College Board. Country Studies include information on institutions, admission and program requirements, grading, credentials awarded, continuing education, study abroad, and linkages with US institutions. Sample documents and placement recommendations approved by the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials appear generally in the full-country and workshop reports.

Argentina 1993
Belgium 1985
Bulgaria 1996
Canada 1989
Denmark 1995
Dominican Republic 1987
Federal Republic of Germany 1986
German Democratic Republic (Former) 1991*
Hong Kong 1998*
Hungary 1990
India 1998
Indonesia 1993
Iraq 1988
Israel 1993*
Japan 1989
Kuwait 1993*
Malaysia 1986
Mexico 1982
The Netherlands 1984
New Zealand 1981
People's Republic of China 2000
Peru 1983
Philippines 2001
Poland 1992
Romania 2000
Slovenia 1995*
Sweden 1995
Swiss—Engineering & Economics and Business Administration 1991*
Thailand 2000
United Kingdom 1991
Vietnam 2000

*Denotes Special Reports that do not include placement recommendations.

ECE Presents. Published by Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. These provide accurate, easy-to-use information for college and university personnel who make foreign student admissions decisions. Available from ECE, PO Box 514070, Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470, Phone (414) 289-3400, Fax (414) 289-3411, E-mail eval@ece.org.

Education in Spain.
The Educational System of Finland.
The Educational System of Italy.
The Educational System of Kenya.
The Educational System of Turkey.
A Guide to Evaluating Educational Credentials from China.
An Overview of the Educational System of Albania.

Other good single country volumes are:

Chinese Universities and Colleges, 2nd edition. 1994. Available through Chinese Education Association for International Exchange, CEAIE Central Office, 37, Damucang Hutong, Xidan, Beijing 100816, China.

Guide to Higher Education in Africa. Available through Macmillan Distribution Ltd., Brunel Road, Houndmills, Basingstoke, hampshire RG21 2XS, England.

Postsecondary Institutions of the People's Republic of China: A Comprehensive Guide to Institutions of Higher Education in China. 1992. (1999 Reprint.) Available through PIER.

The Soviet System of Education. 1992. Available through PIER.

Universities Handbook India. Association of Indian Universities, AIU House, 16 Kotla Marg, New Delhi 110 002, India; Phone 91-11-323-6105, Fax 91-11-323-2131, E-mail aiu@del2.vsnl.net.in, URL http://www.aiuweb.org

C. Regional Studies

The following books are good resources about particular regions.

The Admission and Placement of Students from Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, united Arab Emirates, and Yemen Arab Republic. 1984. Available through PIER.

The Admission and Placement of Students from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. 1986. Available through PIER.

Admission and Placement of Students from Central America: Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama. 1988. Available through PIER.

Central America Higher Education Update: A Special Report. 1996. Available through PIER.

New Independent States and the Baltic Republics: A Directory of Institutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan. 1995. Available through PIER.

D. Periodicals

AACRAO Update (Available from AACRAO)

Advising Quarterly (Available from AMIDEAST)

The Chronicle of Higher Education (Chronicle of Higher Education, 1255 23rd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037; phone: (202) 466-1000; e-mail: circulation@chronicle.com; Internet: http://chronicle.com)

ECE Newsletter (Available through ECE)

Government Affairs Bulletin (Available through NAFSA)

NAFSA Newsletter (Available through NAFSA)

World Education News & Reviews (WENR) (World Education News & Reviews, PO Box 745, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10113-0745; e-mail: wenr@wes.org; Internet: http://www.wes.org)

E. Other Printed Resources

U.S. Government—United States Information Agency (USIA)
301 Fourth Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547; phone: (202) 485-8742

Diplomatic List (Issued quarterly and acts as a directory of foreign Embassies in Washington, DC. Write to US Government Printing Office, Washtington, DC 20402)

Language Dictionaries

Webster's New Geographical Dictionary

Catalogs from international and U.S. institutions

Your own Country Files and Evaluation Files

World Wide Web/Internet

You can find all kinds of information by searching the Net. The following is just a short list of addresses to get you started. If you are already familiar with the Net, you might choose to bookmark some of these addresses.

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
http://www.aacrao.org/

NAFSA: Association of International Educators
http://www.nafsa.org/

A great currency converter (for those of you who handle financial documents)
http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic

The Chronicle of Higher Education
http://chronicle.com/

Test of English as a Foreign Language official website
http://www.toefl.org/index.html

Campus Resources

This sample letter from the University of Kansas will give you an idea of how to begin to build your campus resources and start a campus contacts file.

The University of Kansas
International Student Services

September 22, 1997

TO: Interested KU Faculty and Staff

FROM: Sandy Gault, Assistant Director

RE: Building Campus Resources in International Education

In an effort to draw upon intra-university resources, I am contacting members of our institution in search of experience and expertise in the area of foreign educational systems. In order to best serve our prospective international student population in terms of evaluation of foreign educational credentials and subsequent academic placement, I hope to gather information from KU faculty and staff regarding their international experiences. I hope you will take a few minutes to respond to the following questions and return this form to the ISS address listed below. Thank you for your participation.

1. Have you completed any formal education outside of the U.S.? If so, please list the country, institution, date(s), and the name of the academic program.
2. Have you ever been a faculty member at an institution outside of the U.S.? If so, please list the country, institution, and date(s).
3. Have you been involved with any type of foreign exchange program? If so, please explain briefly.
4. Other than English, what languages do you read or speak?
5. Would you be willing to consult with me, if the need should arise, regarding a foreign educational system in which you have personal knowledge?

2 Strong Hall • Lawrence, KS 66045-1978 • (785) 864-3617 • Fax: (785) 864-5244

B. Conference Attendance

Attending conferences is a lot of fun, but you can also add to your reference library and contact list through them. You will gather handouts and notes through sessions and workshops. You will meet many people over the course of a conference and will come away with lots of business cards of people you can call on for assistance, should you need it.

AACRAO and NAFSA both have annual national, regional, and state conferences/meetings. Many professional evaluation organizations offer several workshops and training sessions annually. Topics range from beginning credential evaluation to country-specific topics and international recruitment issues.

Whatever your office's budget, it is recommended that you attend at least one large conference/meeting per year. No matter how diligently you maintain your international admissions library, nothing can make up for the information you receive or for the contacts you make at conferences.

C. Using Credential Evaluation Services

Many colleges and universities may decide to have their applicants with foreign educational credentials evaluated by organizations providing such services. Institutions should be aware that there is no "approved" list of credential evaluation services. Such services are not licensed (other than possibly as a business), accredited, or certified. Thus, institutions should consider the following in selecting a service for use by their international applicants:

- What training and previous experience do the staff of the service have? Has the credential evaluation staff worked in international admissions before their employment by an evaluation service? Are the evaluators knowledgeable of all educational systems, or only a limited number?
- What resources does the staff use in their evaluations? Is the evaluation consistent with common standards followed by academic institutions that do their own evaluations? Does the service follow the placement recommendations as approved by the National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials?
- Should you choose one service or provide international applicants a list of several services acceptable to the institution? Be aware that not all services evaluate the same credential the same way. What would you do if you received two different interpretations of the same foreign credential?
- Are the evaluators available to answer questions from applicants and institutions that use the service?
- Is the cost of the evaluation consistent with fees typically charged by such services? Charges dramatically above or below the typical fees should warrant caution and further investigation.
- Does the service have a policy to address applicants who are dissatisfied with the evaluation they received? Will a request for re-evaluation cause an evaluator, other than the person who completed the initial evaluation, to review the records?
- How long does it usually take a service to complete an evaluation? Is there some sort of priority service available?

APPENDIX C

AACRAO's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions

Preamble

In response to a growing need for policy guidance on issues related to the delivery of programs and services to international students, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), with guidance from members of the international education community, has developed this Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions (Bill of Rights). As signatories to the Bill of Rights, we reserve the right to display the official logo signifying our support of the principles and practices articulated herein.

Definitions

- An **international student** is defined as any person engaging in learning outside of his or her country of citizenship.
- An **institution** is defined as any institution or entity providing information, facilitating the enrollment of or providing learning opportunities to international students or scholars.
- The **international community** is defined as a complex system of educational entities, government agencies, private organizations, regulatory bodies and individuals delivering education programs and services.

ARTICLE I: INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS of the International Student

Section 1
International students have the right to know who the provider of educational services is and all of the provider's affiliations.

Section 2
International students have the right to a clear explanation from the institution to which they are applying of the admissions process and documentation necessary to complete their admissions dossiers.

Section 3
International students have the right to a clear and complete explanation and description of the academic course offerings and the approximate time normally required to complete an intended program from the institution to which they are applying.

Section 4
International students have the right to receive a clear and accurate account of all costs for the academic year or a reasonable estimation of the full cost of their educational program. This should be explained in application material sent to them by the institutions to which they are applying. International students also have the right to a clear and detailed explanation of costs for services provided by placement agencies or other third parties assisting them in the admissions process. Such service costs should be readily distinguishable from the standard costs associated with a course of study at the students' intended institutions.

Section 5
International students have the right to know what personal information is collected about them, why it is being collected and how they may review their files and correct any errors. International students should have assurance that personal information about them may be used only by those persons with a legitimate right to know.

Section 6
International students have the right to have their applications for admission and their prior learning experiences evaluated by admissions officers or credential evaluators trained to evaluate international applications and learning.

Section 7
International students have the right to a clear explanation from their home institution of whether, or the extent to which, course work at their host institution may be transferable to their program of study at their home institution.

Section 8
International students have the right to services and information that support their unique needs as international students, such as counseling on immigration regulations, cultural adjustment, orientation to the host institution, and information on insurance and taxes.

Section 9
International students have the right to have their language abilities assessed to determine if their skills are sufficient to enable them to benefit from the host institution's academic course offerings.

Section 10
International students have a right to a clear and complete explanation of all legal requirements governing their enrollment, including how to maintain their student status.

Section 11
International students have ownership rights over their intellectual works unless the works are subject to specific published institutional policies to the contrary or ownership rights are relinquished by the students.

ARTICLE II: INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES of the International Student

Section 1
International students shall be honest in their representations to institutions, government entities and others in the international education community. International students shall abide by the host institutions' honor systems. Fraud or misrepresentation of achievements are valid reason for expulsion from the institution.

Section 2
International students shall recognize, honor and properly attribute the intellectual property of others.

Section 3
International students shall adhere to the laws, rules and regulations of the host nation and institution.

ARTICLE III: RIGHTS of Educational Institutions

Section 1
Educational institutions have the right to establish appropriate admissions criteria and deadlines consistent with their educational programs.

Section 2
Educational institutions have the right to establish appropriate and realistic deadlines for completion of the international student's program.

Section 3
Educational institutions have the right to deny admission or continuing enrollment if evidence proves fraud or lack of achievement by the international student.

Section 4
Educational institutions have the right to be informed if an international student is being assisted in admission by a placement agency or other third party.

ARTICLE IV: RESPONSIBILITIES of the Educational Institution

Section 1
Educational institutions claiming an affiliation with another institution shall explain to students the nature of their affiliation, particularly as it might relate to the recognition of academic credentials. Similarly, the institution's official recognition or accreditation shall be disclosed to students.

Section 2
Educational institutions shall provide students with a clear explanation of their admissions process and what documentation is necessary to complete the students' admissions dossiers.

Section 3
Educational institutions shall provide students with a clear and complete explanation and description of the academic course offerings and the approximate time normally required to complete the intended program.

Section 4
Educational institutions shall provide students and their financial sponsors with accurate information about all reasonable costs for the academic year or an estimation of the full cost of their educational program. This information should appear in literature provided to prospective students with application materials. Placement agencies or other third parties assisting students in the admissions process shall provide students with a clear and detailed explanation of the costs associated with these services. These service costs should be readily distinguishable from the standard costs associated with a course of study at the intended institution.

Section 5
Educational institutions, upon request of the student, shall let the student know what personal information is collected about him or her, why it is being collected and how the student may review the file and correct any errors. Institutions shall treat all files on students as confidential, examining or disclosing the contents only when authorized by the owner of the information, approved by the appropriate institutional official on a need-to-know basis, or as required by law. Institutions shall develop, implement, and maintain security procedures to insure the integrity of their files.

Section 6
Educational institutions shall ensure that students' applications for admission and their prior learning experiences are evaluated by admissions officers and/or credential evaluators trained to evaluate international applications and learning.

Section 7
Educational institutions considered home institutions shall provide clear explanations as to whether, or the extent to which, students' course work may be transferable to their programs of study in their home countries.

Section 8
Educational institutions shall provide services and information that support the unique needs of international students, such as immigration regulations, cultural adjustment advising, orientation, insurance, and tax information.

Section 9
Educational institutions shall assess whether international applicants possess sufficient command of the language of the host country to ensure that students will benefit from the academic course offerings. If the institution lacks proficiency programs to remedy an applicant's language deficiency, it shall not admit the applicant until he or she shows evidence of facility in the host language.

Section 10
Educational institutions shall inform international students and their financial sponsors of all legal requirements governing the students' enrollment.

December 1996

Permission: Permission is hereby given to make and distribute copies of the *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions* for non-profit purposes on condition that the Bill of Rights or any publication in which it appears is attributed to the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. Please forward a copy of the publication in which the Bill of Rights appears to AACRAO, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 520 Washington, DC 20036-1135.

Information: Questions or comments regarding the *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for International Students and Institutions* should be addressed to AACRAO at the above address or voice: (202) 293-9161 or Fax: (202) 872-8857.

AACRAO Publications

Visit our web site at www.aacrao.org for our latest publication information.

Academic Record and Transcript Guide 1996.
$30 nonmember/$20 member; Item #1249

Becoming a Leader in Enrollment Services: A Development Guide for the Higher Education Professional.
$43 nonmember/$29.95 member; 1997; 244pp; Item #9928

Breakthrough Systems: Student Access and Registration.
$50 nonmember/$35 member; 1996; Item #1251

Bogus U.S. Institutions: How to Avoid Fake Schools and Fake Degrees.
$4 for 10 copies, $7.50 for 25 copies; 1998; Item #1245

Certification of Students Under Veterans' Laws 1998.
$30 nonmember/$20 member; 1999; Item # 0199

Challenges in College Admissions—A Report of a Survey of Undergraduate Admissions Policies, Practices, and Procedures.
$40 nonmember/$25 member; 1995; 169pp; Item #1252

Effective Interviewing to Build a Quality Student Service Staff.
$15 nonmember/$12 member; 1989; 72pp; Item #2469

Effective Performance Appraisals for Quality Student Service.
$15 nonmember/$12 member; 1991; 71pp; Item #2470

Effective Telephone Communication Skills.
$15 nonmember/$12 member; 1989; 78pp; Item #2471

Electronic Imaging in Admissions, Records, and Financial Aid Offices.
$60 nonmember/$40 member; 1996; Item #1253

FERPA Update 2001: Guidelines to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 as Amended.
$70 nonmember/$50 member; Item #0101

FERPA and Secondary Education: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 As Amended and the Student.
$30 nonmember/$20 member; 1997; 124pp; Item #1247

Foreign Educational Credentials Required for Consideration of Admission to Universities and Colleges in the United States, 4th edition.
$60 nonmember/$40 member; 1994; 216pp; Item #4002

Grades and Grading Practices: Results of the 1992 AACRAO Survey.
$18 nonmember/$15 member; 1994; 80pp; Item #3004

Hopwood, Bakke, and Beyond: Diversity on Our Nation's Campuses.
$45 nonmember/$25 member; 1998; 27pp; Item #3012

International Academic Credentials Handbook, Volume I.
$30 nonmember/$20 member; 1998; 566pp; Item #4003

International Academic Credentials Handbook, Volume II.
$30 nonmember/$20 member; 1989; 550pp; Item #4004

International Academic Credentials Handbook, Volume III.
$40 nonmember/$30 member; 1992; 450pp; Item #4007

Misrepresentation in the Marketplace and Beyond: Ethics Under Siege.
$25 nonmember/$15 member; 1996; 64pp; Item #1248

Navigating Change in the New Millennium: Enrollment Leadership Strategies.
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